

# ASSESSING THE IRAN DEAL



**A survey of the National Citizen Cabinet  
Conducted by the Program for Public Consultation,  
School of Public Policy, University of Maryland**

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## OVERVIEW

On July 14, 2015, after two years of negotiations, the United States, the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany, and Iran announced they had reached agreement on a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran's nuclear program. On July 20 the Security Council endorsed the agreement unanimously.

Under terms agreed between the U.S. Congress and the White House, Congress has until September 17<sup>th</sup> to disapprove the JCPOA if it wants to prevent President Obama from suspending U.S. nuclear sanctions after Iran fulfills its nuclear commitments. Thus an intense debate is underway.

Advocates on both sides have been making their appeals to the American public at a volume, and with a forcefulness, seen in foreign policy issues only a few times a decade. After the initial rollout of the agreement—a phase in which the White House essentially held the floor—critics of the agreement have been widely heard, both in and out of Congress. Media polls have been sporadic and inconsistent. In polls that offer respondents the opportunity to say that they do not have enough information to say, approximately half take it. In this case, the minority opposing the deal tends to outweigh those favoring it. In some polls that give respondents minimal information about the basic outlines of the deal, majorities have approved of it. Apparently Americans have low levels of information and their responses are affected by minimal inputs.

Citizen Cabinet surveys are not meant to simply be another poll. Rather the goal is to find out what a representative panel of registered voters recommends when they are given a briefing and hear arguments for and against the key options. The process they go through is called a 'policymaking simulation,' in that the goal is to put the respondent into the shoes of a policymaker. The content of the simulation is vetted with Congressional staffers and other experts to assure accuracy and balance.

Earlier Citizen Cabinet surveys on the Iran deal focused on the central debate at the time as to whether the US

should make a deal based on allowing Iran limited uranium enrichment with intrusive inspections or if it should seek to ramp up economic sanctions in an effort to get Iran to give up its enrichment program entirely. Arguments for both options were found convincing but in the end, in February, 61% in a national Citizen Cabinet recommended in favor of making the deal. In June Citizen Cabinet surveys in three states (Oklahoma, Maryland, and Virginia) went through the same process but with more detail about the draft agreement. In all states seven in ten recommended the deal over ramping up sanctions.

In the current Citizen Cabinet survey the simulation focused much more deeply on the terms of the deal, especially the terms that have been highly criticized by Members of Congress. Panelists were first briefed on the origins of the international dispute over Iran's nuclear program and the main issues during the negotiations and given a detailed summary of the agreement's main features. Then panelists evaluated a series of critiques—some general, some quite specific—prominent in the Congressional debate, and assessed a rebuttal offered for each.

Panelists then assessed proposals for three alternative courses of action that have been proposed, evaluating arguments for and against each and also assessing each one's chances of success. Finally panelists were asked what they would recommend to their member of Congress—to approve the deal, or disapprove of it, and, if the latter, what alternative course to take.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted August 17-20, 2015 with a panel consisting of a representative sample of 702 adult registered voters (margin of error: 3.7%). The panel was recruited by Nielsen Scarborough from its larger probability-based national panel. Responses were weighted by age, income, gender, education, and race with benchmarks from the Census' 2014 Current Population Survey of Registered Voters. The sample was also weighted by party identification, though the effect of this weighting was slight.



**SUMMARY and KEY FINDINGS**

Panelists were presented the two major options—for Congress to approve of the deal, or to disapprove of it—in terms of how acceptable or tolerable they would find it. Six in ten found either option at least tolerable.

Panelists were presented general critiques of the deal followed by rebuttals and asked to evaluate each one in terms of how convincing it was. Two thirds found convincing the argument that the whole idea of negotiating with Iran is misguided, while slightly fewer found convincing the argument that diplomacy is the best available approach. Two thirds found convincing the argument that the deal would increase the chances that Iran would end up with nuclear weapons, while just under six in ten found convincing the argument that it reduces the chance. Just over half found convincing the argument that the US could have gotten a better deal, while slightly more found convincing the argument that this was not the case.

Panelists were then presented critiques of specific of the deal—that the deal does not provide inspectors access anytime and anywhere, that the special limits are only in place for 10-15 years, and that the deal frees up about \$100 billion in assets that the Iranian government could use for negative purposes. All of these arguments were found convincing by large majorities, while the rebuttals were found convincing by modest majorities. While large majorities of both parties found the critiques convincing, large majorities of Democrats found the rebuttals convincing, but only about one in three Republicans did.

Panelists were asked to evaluate arguments for and against alternatives to the deal. The argument in favor of ramping up sanctions to get Iran to give up uranium enrichment entirely was found convincing by six in ten, while the argument against this proposal was also found convincing by the same number. Asked how likely it would be that other countries would stop trading with Iran in response to sanctions, six in ten thought it would be at least somewhat likely.

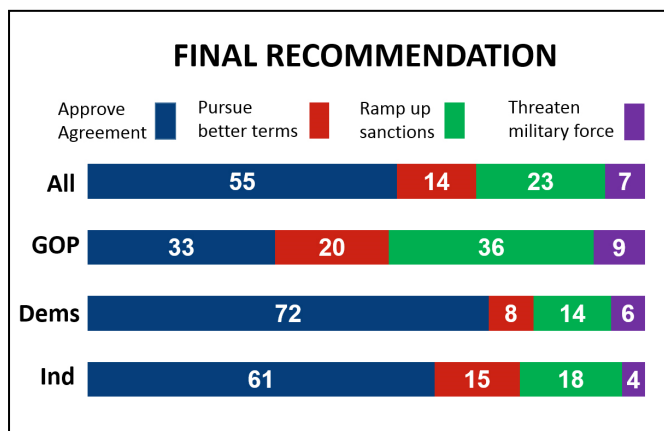
The argument in favor of Congress telling the administration that it should seek to renew negotiations to get a deal with better was found

convincing by six in ten. However, a larger two-thirds (including nearly six in ten Republicans) found convincing the counter argument that this is not realistic. Asked how likely it is that the other permanent members of the UN Security Council would agree to this plan, a majority said that it was not likely. Asked how likely it is that Iran would agree to return to negotiations and make concessions, eight in ten said it was not likely.

The argument for using military threats against Iran to give up its nuclear enrichment program and allow anytime/anywhere inspections was found unconvincing by a modest majority, while the argument against it was found convincing by more than seven in ten. Eight in ten thought it was not likely that Iran would capitulate in response to such threats.

After considering the various arguments and options, panelists reassessed the options separately. Approving of the deal was found slightly more acceptable or tolerable, and not approving of the deal slightly less so.

Panelists were finally asked whether they would recommend that their Members of Congress approve of the deal. Those that did not recommend approval were offered other options. Ultimately 55% recommended approval, including 72% of Democrats, 61% of Independents and 33% of Republicans. Twenty-three percent recommended ramping up sanctions, 14% seeking to renegotiate the deal, and 7% using military threats.





## BRIEFING

**Panelists were briefed about issues surrounding Iran’s uranium enrichment program; about how the negotiations were conducted; and main features of the final agreement. Half said they knew at least some about the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), while the rest knew little. Similar numbers said they knew that as part of the NPT Iran had agreed to not develop nuclear weapons.**

The briefing provided background on the Non-Proliferation Treaty, covering the following points:

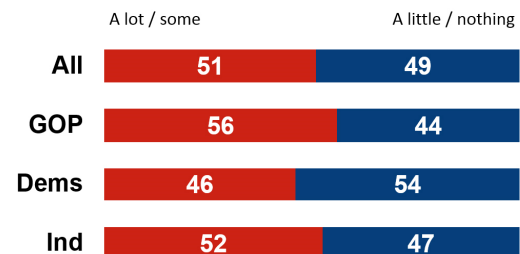
- Under the NPT, Iran can have a nuclear energy program, though not a nuclear weapons program.
- Iran is required as an NPT member to provide information to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and accept IAEA inspections, to assure that its program is purely peaceful.
- For nuclear energy purposes, enrichment of uranium to the 5% level is adequate; a nuclear weapon usually requires a 90% level.
- In 2002 the IAEA determined that Iran had been building an enrichment facility without informing the agency, and had other activities that could be related to developing a nuclear weapon.
- From 2003 to 2006, Iran suspended work towards enrichment and cooperated with IAEA as part of an international effort to resolve the issue, but no final agreement resulted and Iran resumed enrichment.
- The UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding that Iran suspend enrichment-related activities and imposing some economic sanctions.
- The US had stopped virtually all its trade with Iran well before it imposed new sanctions.
- The US’ new sanctions, related to Iran’s nuclear program, are aimed at other countries’ business with Iran and have indeed reduced such business. Iran, nonetheless, persisted in enriching uranium and substantially increased its capacity to do so.

The briefing then explained the main components of the agreement resulting from the negotiations that began in February 2013:

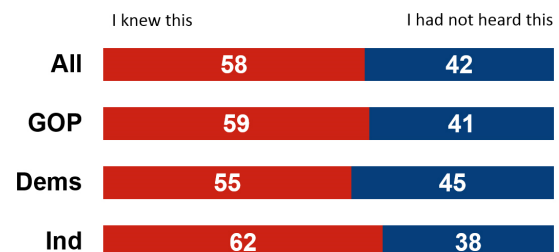
- Among other things, Iran has agreed to:
- Recommit to never build a nuclear weapon.

- Limit its uranium enrichment below the 3.67 percent level for 15 years, making the uranium only useful for nuclear energy. After 15 years they will be able to enrich to a higher level, such as for medical purposes, but not to develop a military capability.
- Deeply reduce its stockpile of low-enriched uranium—cutting it by 98 percent—for 15 years. Reduce its number of centrifuges (the devices that enrich uranium) by two-thirds—keeping only its older and slower centrifuge models—for 10 years. The other centrifuges will go into storage monitored by the IAEA.
- Allow intrusive inspections of all declared nuclear facilities, which will be permanent.
- Allow inspection of any site, including military bases, where inspectors have evidence of suspicious activity. Iran could appeal to a council that includes all the countries that signed the agreement and seek to explain the suspicious activity, whereupon the council will decide, by majority rule, whether the inspections will proceed. The process of making this decision cannot take more than 24 days.

### How much have you heard about the Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT?



### Did you know that Iran, as a member of the NPT, has agreed to not develop a nuclear weapon, or had you not heard this?







In exchange, the UN and the EU will lift their nuclear-related sanctions on Iran and the US will suspend its nuclear-related sanctions, after verification that Iran has fulfilled its requirements. If Iran is found to be in violation of the agreement the sanctions against Iran will ‘snap back’ and be reimposed. If Iran complies fully with its obligation for eight years, then Congress will consider whether or not the US nuclear-related sanctions should be permanently lifted.

### INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS SEPARATELY

**Panelists were presented the two major options—for Congress to approve of the deal, or to disapprove of it—in terms of how acceptable or tolerable they would find it. Six in ten found either option at least tolerable.**

Panelists were presented the two alternative policies between which they would ultimately decide—whether Congress should **approve** or **disapprove** of:

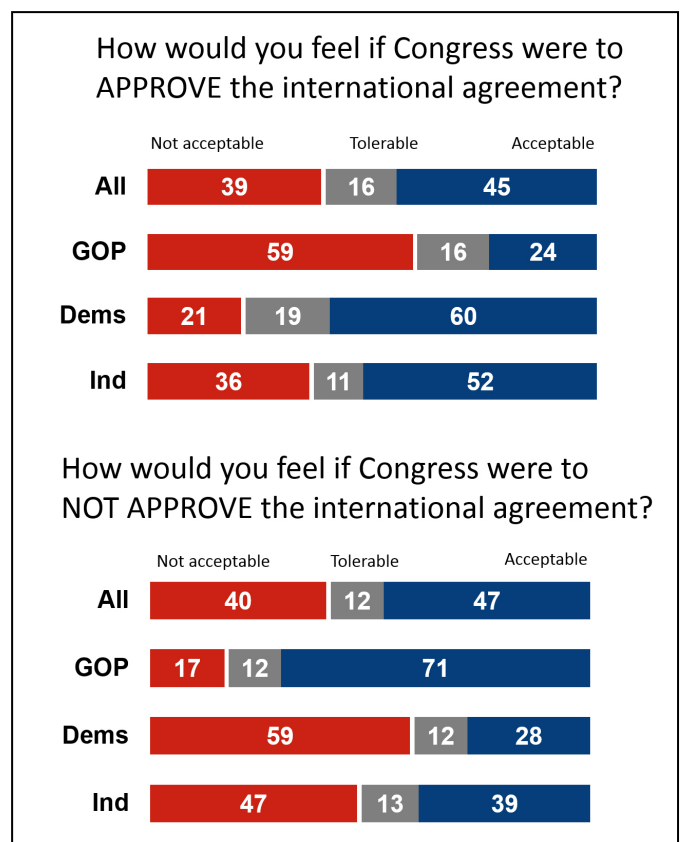
...this international agreement that limits Iran’s capacity to enrich uranium to the low level necessary for nuclear energy, requires it to accept intrusive inspections, and lifts sanctions on Iran once it deeply reduces its stockpile of enriched uranium and its number of operating centrifuges?

Panelists were asked to evaluate each option on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being completely unacceptable, 10 being completely acceptable and 5 being ‘just tolerable.’ Thus a 0-4 score means the option is unacceptable, a 5 means it is tolerable, and a 6-10 score means it is acceptable.

Both options received very similar assessments. Sixty-one percent found approving of the deal to be either acceptable (45%) or tolerable (16%). A similar 59% found disapproval acceptable (47%) or tolerable (12%). However, more panelists gave this option higher scores in the 6-to-10 range, so its mean score was 5.6—higher than 5.1 for approving the deal. About the same numbers rated each option not acceptable—39% for approving of the deal and 40% for disapproving of it.

There were substantial differences by party:

- Among Republicans, 59% thought approving of the deal would not be acceptable (24% acceptable, 16% tolerable), while disapproving of the deal was acceptable to seven in ten (71%).
- Among Democrats, four in five (79%) thought approving of the deal would be acceptable (60%) or tolerable (19%), while disapproving of the deal was not acceptable to 59%.
- Among independents, six in ten (63%) thought approving of the deal would be acceptable (52%) or tolerable (11%). Disapproving of the deal was at least tolerable to a modest 52% (acceptable, 39%), but almost half found it unacceptable (47%).





## ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL CRITIQUES OF THE DEAL

Panelists were presented general critiques of the deal followed by rebuttals and asked to evaluate each one in terms of how convincing it was.

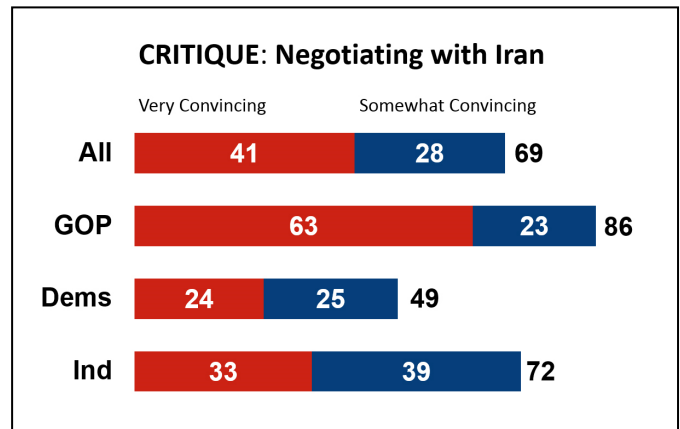
- Two thirds found convincing the argument that the whole idea of negotiating with Iran is misguided, while slightly fewer found convincing the argument that diplomacy is the best available approach.
- Two thirds found convincing the argument that the deal would increase the chances that Iran would end up with nuclear weapons, while just under six in ten found convincing the argument that it reduces the chance.
- Just over half found convincing the argument that the US could have gotten a better deal, while slightly more found convincing the argument that this was not the case.

Panelists first considered three broad, general critiques frequently voiced since the announcement of the deal.

### *Whether to negotiate with Iran in general*

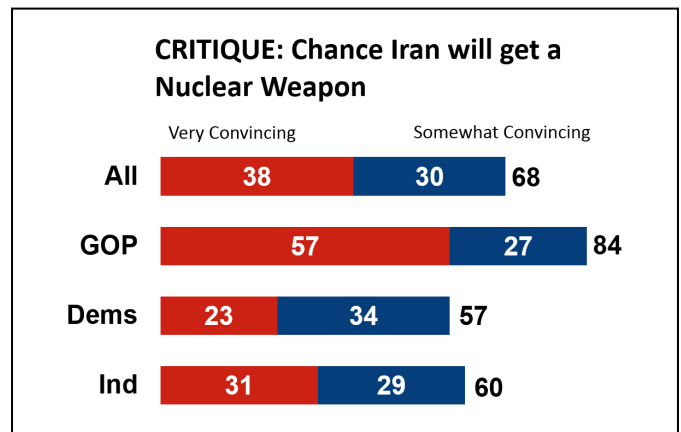
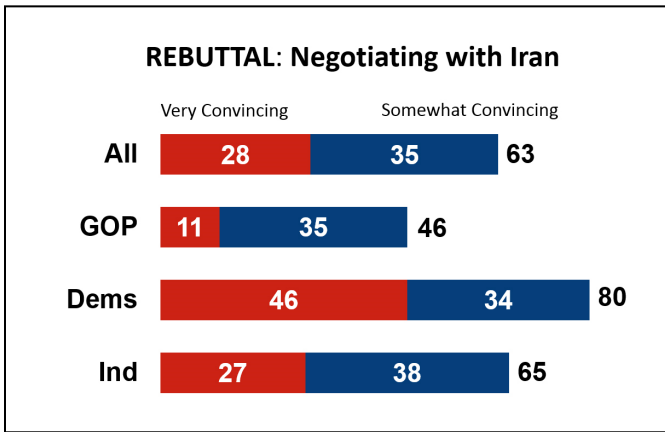
The first critique panelists saw declared that for a host of reasons Iran was not a fit partner for negotiations in the first place, and that... “Making a deal...treats them like they are a legitimate country, which they are not.” Seven in ten (69%) found the critique convincing (41% very), a response strongly driven by Republicans (86%) and independents (72%). Democrats were divided, with 49% finding the critique convincing and 50% not.

**CRITIQUE:** The whole idea of making a deal with Iran is misguided. Iran is fundamentally hostile to the United States, with Iranians regularly chanting ‘Death to America.’ Iranian leaders also endorse the elimination of Israel. They support terrorist groups and seek to dominate the Middle East. Iran has shown that it is unreliable and dishonest: it has violated arms control agreements in the past. We simply can’t trust Iran’s government. Making a deal with it treats them like they are a legitimate country, which they are not.



The rebuttal stated that a diplomatic solution requiring inspections and verification was better than the alternatives of simply tightening sanctions or military action, because both of these were likely to fail. The rebuttal was found convincing by almost as many—63%, though fewer found it very convincing (28%). However, 52% of Republicans found it unconvincing (46% convincing), while four in five Democrats (80%) found it convincing (46% very). Independents reflected the full sample.

**REBUTTAL:** Regardless of how we feel about Iran, a diplomatic agreement with tight restrictions and tough inspections is the best available approach. We have been tightening sanctions for years now and yet Iran has not given up enriching uranium. Bombing Iran’s nuclear facilities would just lead Iran to kick out the IAEA inspectors and rebuild the program underground. Invading and occupying is completely unrealistic given that Iran is a huge country, with a substantial military, and a large population that would likely be very hostile. Given that the Iranian government has reached an agreement with our negotiators that is based on a commitment not to build nuclear weapons, we should give this option a chance. Making a deal with them does not mean we trust them—it means having intrusive inspections to verify that they are respecting the limits they agreed to and are not building a nuclear weapon.



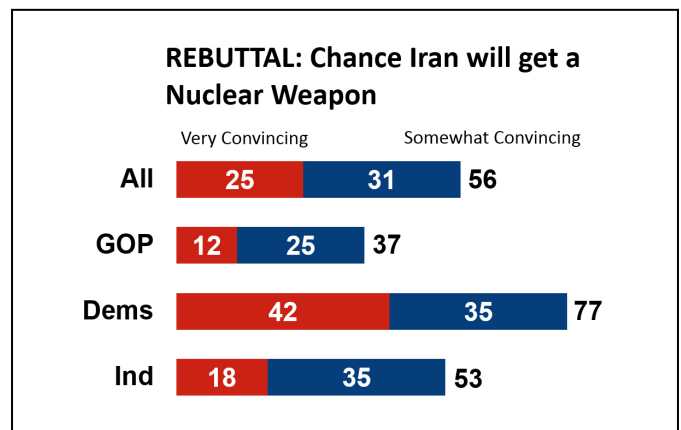
**Whether the agreement raises or lowers the chances of Iran getting a nuclear weapon**

The next broad critique concerned whether the agreement would increase or reduce the chances that Iran will develop a nuclear weapon at some point. It argued that since Iran’s centrifuges would be stored away but not destroyed, and since some forms of research and development could continue, the deal would actually increase Iran’s chances for a nuclear weapon, leaving it in a good position to break out at a later time. Two thirds (68%) called this argument convincing (very 38%). Nearly all Republicans thought so (84%), as did about three in five Democrats and independents (57% and 60% respectively).

CRITIQUE: This deal *increases* the chance that Iran will end up with a nuclear weapon. The deal does not fully remove Iran’s capacity to develop nuclear weapons. Most of the centrifuges will simply be stored away. More important, limiting Iran’s enrichment to the 3.67% level does not mean that its progress toward a nuclear weapon will be completely stopped. They will be able to continually refine their know-how on enrichment and do other types of research and development. After eight and a half years they will also be able to produce some more advanced centrifuges. Thus, should Iran decide to break out of the agreement, it will be able to simply kick out the UN inspectors, restart its centrifuges and move toward getting a nuclear weapon even faster than it could now.

The rebuttal said that the deal’s intrusive inspections, 98% stockpile reduction and reduction of centrifuges to a third of what Iran had before would reduce the chances Iran could develop a nuclear weapon. Just under six in ten (56%) found this convincing (very, 25%). While 77% of Democrats found it convincing, this was true of only 37% of Republicans (independents, 53%).

REBUTTAL: This deal *reduces* the chances that Iran will end up with a nuclear weapon. It puts in place a permanent intrusive inspection regime so we will know exactly what the Iranians are doing, and it blocks all their paths to a nuclear weapon. It reduces their stockpile of enriched uranium by 98% and their number of centrifuges by two-thirds. If Iran sticks with the deal, we’ll know they aren’t making a nuclear weapon. If they try to break out of the deal, with more intrusive inspections, we will have much better means to spot it immediately, and it will be so completely clear that we will be better able to mobilize the world against them. Either way we come out ahead of where we are now.

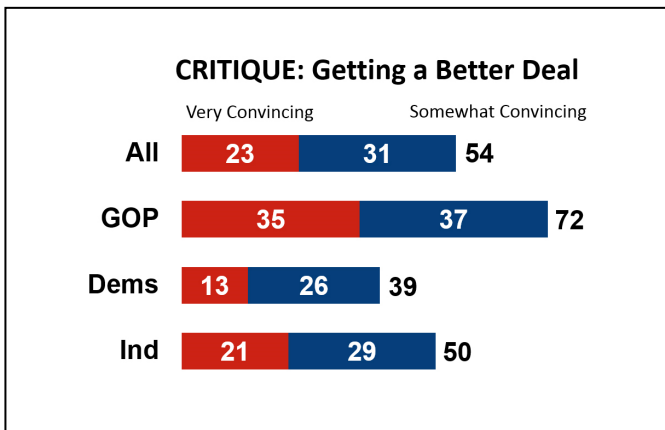




**Whether it was possible to negotiate a better deal**

This argument cited the deal’s widely reported positive reception from ordinary Iranians as evidence that “clearly they feel they got the better of us,” and asserted that the US could have extracted better terms by walking away. This was convincing to a modest majority (54%; very, 23%). While 72% of Republicans thought it convincing, three in five Democrats said it was not (60%). Independents were divided.

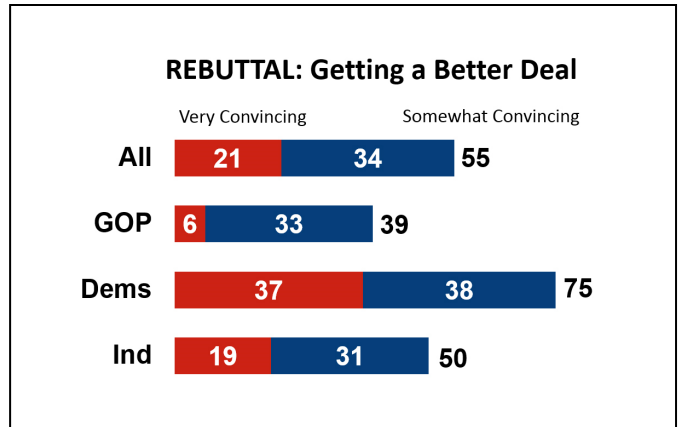
CRITIQUE: Surely, the US could have gotten a better deal. When the deal was reported in Tehran, people were cheering in the streets. Clearly they feel that they got the better of us and were relieved at the possibility of the sanctions coming off. They need this deal more than we do. If we had simply walked away from the table the Iranians would have begged us to come back, and they would have been ready to make more concessions.



The rebuttal pointed out that the hardliners in Iran are not happy with the deal, which suggests political leaders there are already making important concessions, and so more pressure would not get more results. The rebuttal did about as well as the critique, with 55% finding it convincing (very, 21%). Three in four Democrats (75%) found it convincing, while 59% of Republicans found it unconvincing. Independents were divided, as they were for the preceding critique as well.

REBUTTAL: It is always an appealing fantasy that with a little more pressure one could get a better deal. In Tehran, some Iranians are also complaining that Iran could have gotten a better deal. Though many average

people in Tehran were cheering, the hardliners were not happy with the deal and the Supreme Leader seems to have come around only begrudgingly. When we put more pressure on them in earlier negotiations, they did not come back with more concessions, but rather, greatly accelerated their nuclear program.



**ASSESSMENT OF CRITIQUES OF SPECIFIC TERMS OF THE DEAL**

Panelists were then presented critiques of specific terms of the deal:

- it does not require Iran to stop all enrichment;
- it does not provide inspectors access anytime and anywhere;
- the special limits are only in place for 10-15 years;
- the deal frees up about \$100 billion in assets that the Iranian government could use for negative purposes.

All of these arguments were found convincing by large majorities and the rebuttals were found convincing by modest majorities. While large majorities of both parties found the critiques convincing, large majorities of Democrats found the rebuttals convincing, but only about one in three Republicans did.

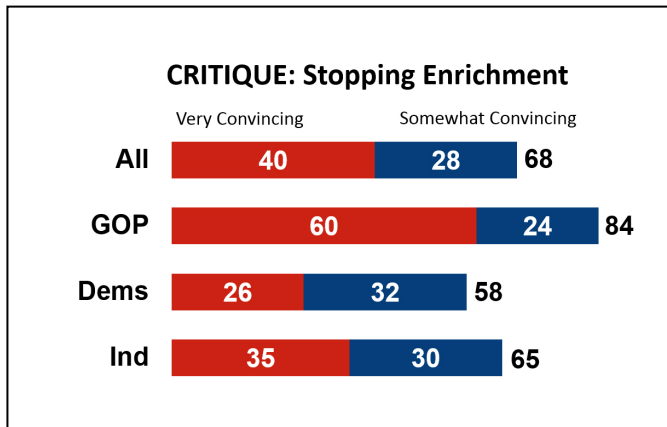
**Whether Iran should have to stop all enrichment**

This critique argued that since Iran’s past actions show it cannot be trusted with enrichment, the deal should require Iran to completely give up enrichment capacity. Two thirds (68%) found this convincing (40% very), including majorities of Republicans (84%), Democrats (58%) and independents (65%).



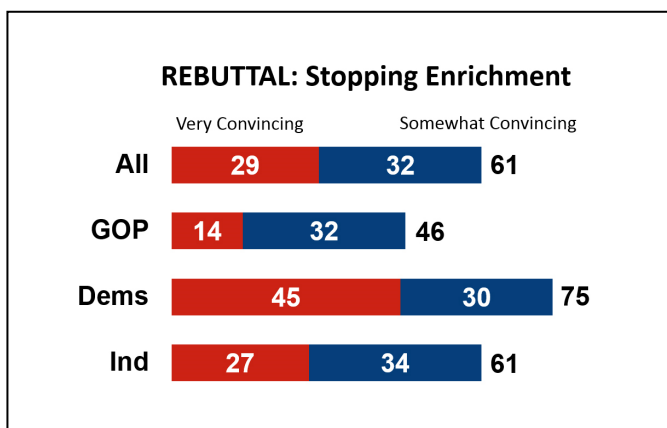


**CRITIQUE:** The deal allows Iran to continue to enrich uranium. It should require that Iran give up all of its capacity for enrichment. Iran has shown that it cannot be trusted with this capability. Letting Iran have the capacity to enrich leaves it in a position to break out of the deal and race for a nuclear weapon.



The rebuttal said that because NPT recognizes all nations’ right to a nuclear energy program, getting Iran to commit to limit its enrichment is the only reasonable goal; the US “would never let other countries tell us whether or not we can make our own nuclear fuel.” Three in five (61%) found this convincing (29% very); among Democrats and independents this was 75% and 61% respectively. A majority of Republicans disagreed (53%; 46% convincing).

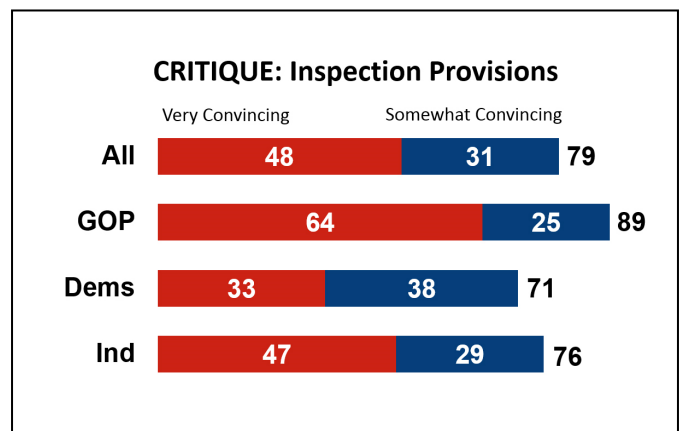
**REBUTTAL:** Getting Iran to commit to limit its enrichment is the only reasonable goal. As a Member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has agreed not to have nuclear weapons, but it never agreed not to enrich uranium. The Treaty even recognizes all nations’ right to a nuclear energy program. We would never let other countries tell us whether or not we can make our own nuclear fuel.



**Whether the deal’s inspection provisions are strong enough**

One specific critique expressed dissatisfaction with the deal’s special procedure for inspections of places in Iran that are not on the list of declared nuclear sites, saying “We can demand to inspect those sites if we see suspicious activities, but Iran can ask for hearings where it can argue that it is not really necessary...” and that Iran could potentially have as much as 24 days to hide activities. Four in five (79%) found this a convincing argument (48% very), and this view was widely held among Republicans (89%), Democrats (71%), and independents (76%).

**CRITIQUE:** While the deal does allow us to continuously monitor nuclear sites, it does not provide anytime/anywhere access to other sites such as military installations. We can demand to inspect those sites if we see suspicious activities, but Iran can ask for hearings where it can argue that it is not really necessary. We can ultimately gain access, but the whole process can take up to 24 days, and meanwhile Iran could hide their illegal activities. While some illegal nuclear activities can be detected, others cannot.

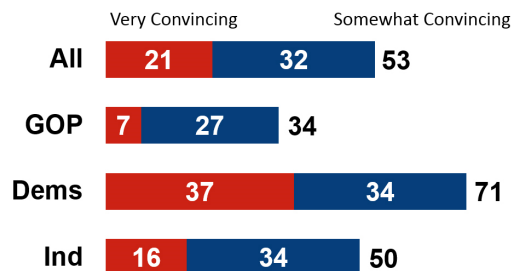


The rebuttal did much less well. It pointed out that monitoring involves far more than just visiting (ground observation of the area, satellite photographs, radiation testing), and argued that consequently cheating is extremely difficult. A modest 53% found it convincing (21% very). Evaluations were very partisan, with 71% of Democrats and only 34% of Republicans finding the rebuttal convincing (independents were divided).



**REBUTTAL:** It will be very hard for Iran to cheat without being caught. In addition to continuously monitoring nuclear sites, we will be able to monitor activities throughout the country with resources on the ground and by satellite. If we see suspicious activities we can demand access anywhere. Even if Iran holds up the process a few weeks we will continue to observe the site closely during that period. Further, it's not possible to remove all signs of nuclear activities. For example, Geiger counters can detect whether any significant nuclear materials were in the area at any time in the previous several months.

### REBUTTAL: Inspection Provisions

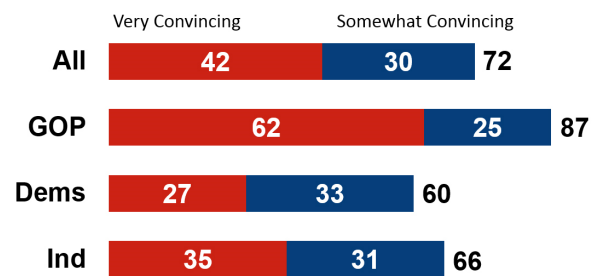


#### ***Whether the special limits are too temporary***

Another specific critique held that after 10 or 15 years, as different special limits expire, Iran will once again be in a position where it could enrich enough uranium for a nuclear weapon in a short period of time if it broke other parts of the agreement and violated the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Seven in ten (72%) found this convincing (42% very). This included majorities of Republicans (87%), Democrats (60%), and independents (66%).

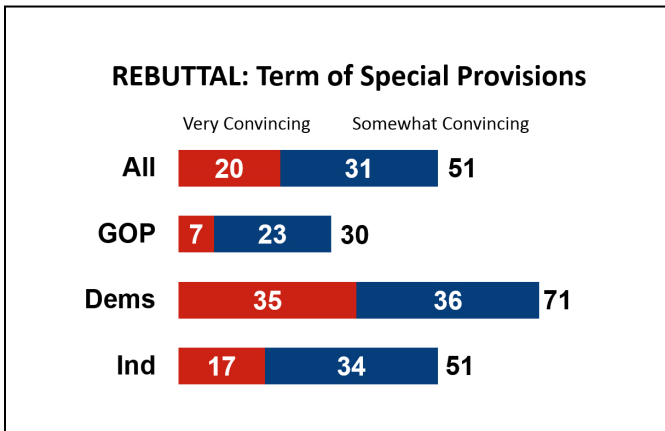
**CRITIQUE:** After 10-15 years most of the special limits on Iran's nuclear activities will go away. Iran will be able to increase its stockpile of enriched uranium, increase its numbers of centrifuges and enrich above the 3.67% limit. Clearly, Iran will then be in a position to break out of the agreement and build a nuclear weapon quickly. They will just have to bide their time for a while and eventually their day will come.

### CRITIQUE: Term of Special Provisions



The rebuttal argued that intrusive inspections will remain after the special limits expire, the world's knowledge of the details of Iran's nuclear program will be vastly greater as a result of the agreement, and that if Iran were to move toward non-compliance with the NPT, the US' hands would not be tied in any way. But this was convincing to only a bare majority (51%; 20% very). Reactions were extremely partisan, with 71% of Democrats but only 30% of Republicans finding it convincing. Independents reflected the full sample.

**REBUTTAL:** It is true that if after 10 years Iran has complied with the terms of the agreement, it will be able to have the same civilian nuclear programs as other members of the NPT Treaty without nuclear weapons. However, the intrusive inspections will stay in place and Iran will still be committed to not building a nuclear weapon. After 15 years of intrusive inspections of all aspects of Iran's nuclear program – from its uranium mines through to its centrifuges – we will have a good handle on the situation and be able to detect unusual activities if Iran were to decide to break out of the NPT and pursue a nuclear weapon. We will be in a good position – much better than now – to intervene in whatever way we see fit. Nothing in the agreement would prevent us from taking whatever steps we deem necessary to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.



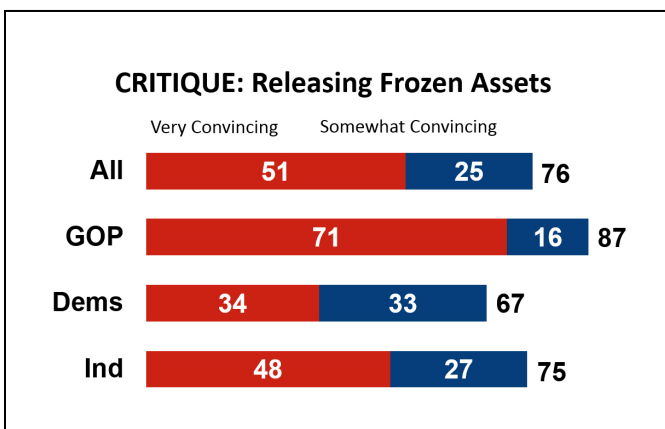
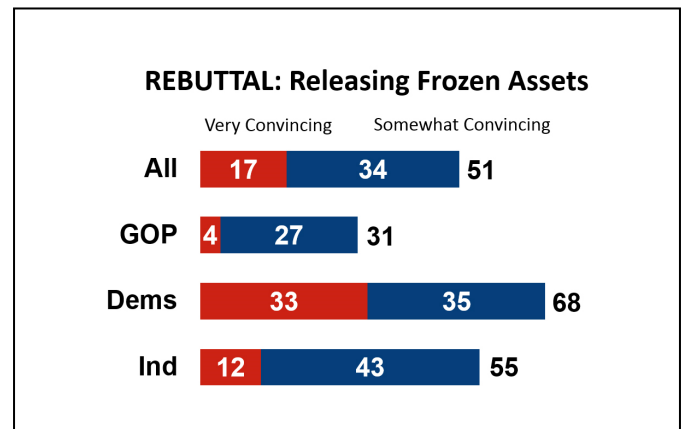
The rebuttal, again, did much less well. It argued that it will be politically necessary for Rouhani to direct most of the released money to the country’s ailing economy, which is the CIA’s assessment as well. A bare majority of 51% found this convincing, with two thirds of Democrats (68%) and a majority of independents (55%) thinking so, but only 31% of Republicans.

REBUTTAL: Even though some of the funds that are unfrozen may be used in support of the kinds of activities that make Iran a problem for the US, a recent CIA assessment concluded that most of the money from frozen assets will be used to shore up Iran’s economy. Iran only spends 3% of its GDP on defense, so it is unlikely to treat this money differently. Furthermore, surveys show that the Iranian public is expecting to see some immediate positive economic results from the deal, so President Rouhani will probably have to try to deliver on that promise.

**Whether releasing frozen assets will be a grave security threat**

A third specific critique focused on the release of Iran’s frozen assets, arguing that Iran will likely use the funds for military and proxy activities, including the support of terrorist groups in the Middle East. This critique was found convincing on a wide bipartisan basis: 76% overall (51% very), including 87% of Republicans, 67% of Democrats, and 75% of independents.

CRITIQUE: The deal calls for removing the sanctions on Iran, which will make about \$100 billion of frozen Iranian funds available to the Iranian government. Iran will be able to use this money to strengthen its military, pursue its destabilizing activities in the Middle East and support terrorist groups. That’s why allies in the region are worried about this deal. Thus, this deal will hurt our friends and help our enemies. It will also strengthen Iran’s economy which will help them withstand future sanctions if they decide to breakout and go after a nuclear weapon.



**EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS**

Having evaluated critiques of the deal with their rebuttals, panelists then moved on to considering what alternative courses of action if Congress were to disapprove of the deal. There were three alternatives: one based on ramping up sanctions, a second on starting a new round of negotiations, and a third on military threats and possible action. For each alternative, panelists evaluated an argument in favor and an argument against. They were also asked to rate how likely it was that the alternative would succeed in its objectives.

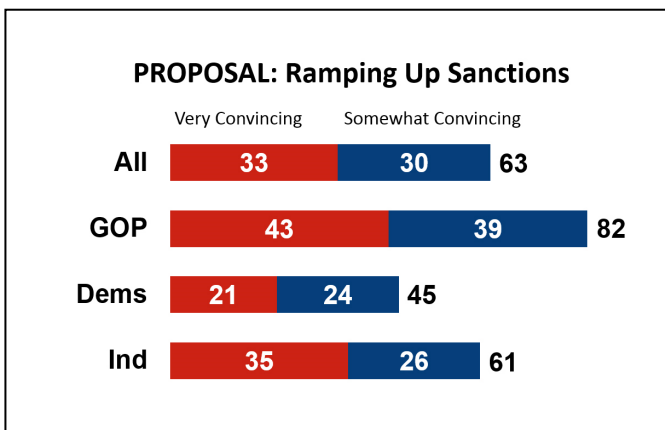


### Ramping Up Sanctions

**The argument in favor of ramping up sanctions to get Iran to give up uranium enrichment entirely was found convincing by six in ten, while the argument against this proposal was also found convincing by the same number. Asked how likely it would be that other countries would stop trading with Iran in response to sanctions, six in ten thought it would be at least somewhat likely.**

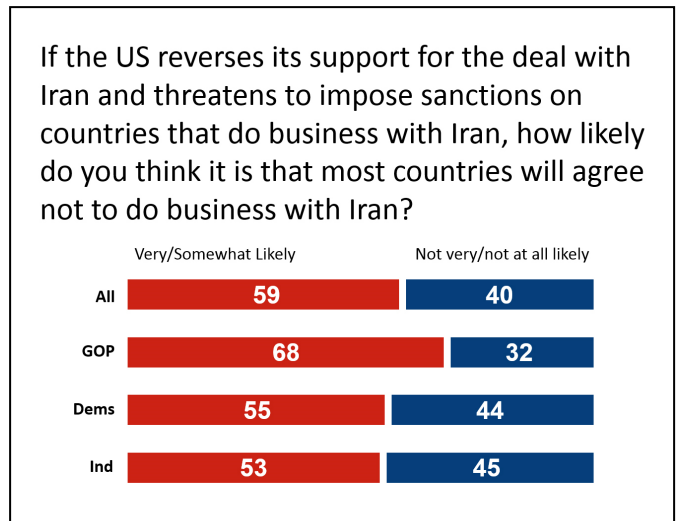
The first alternative proposed that the US Congress should reject the deal and set the goal of getting Iran to end all uranium enrichment, doing this via new sanctions on Iran and secondary sanctions on other countries. Eventually, it argued, the Iranian people would demand that the enrichment program be given up. Over three in five (63%) found the argument convincing (33% very), but a majority of Democrats (54%) did not. Four in five Republicans (82%) found it convincing. Independents reflected the full sample.

**PROPOSAL:** The US Congress should reject the current deal with Iran and instead insist on getting Iran to give up its enrichment program entirely. We should stick with sanctions and ratchet them up higher, not just on Iran, but also on other countries that are doing business with Iran. We can see they are working. The Iranian economy is suffering and the Iranian people have had enough. That is why they elected a new president that was willing to come to the table. Eventually, the Iranian people will get tired of the economic pain that comes from the sanctions, and this will lead them to demand that Iran fully give up its enrichment program. We should stick with the sanctions until Iran gives up enrichment entirely and permanently, and allows inspectors in on our terms.



The critique of this proposal argued that returning to a sanctions regime will involve pressuring the very countries who have negotiated and signed the deal, and thus will not work. This was found convincing by 62% (28% very)—about as many as had found the proposed alternative convincing—and 70% of Democrats. Unusually, Republicans were divided.

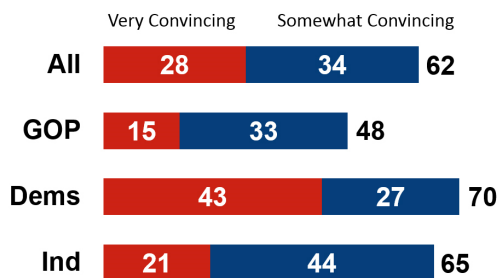
Panelists were then asked whether “most countries will agree not to do business with Iran.” Interestingly, the response was not very partisan. Overall, 59% thought this likely and 40% did not. Majorities of Republicans (68%), Democrats (55%), and independents (53%) thought it likely.



**CRITIQUE:** Because the US has already stopped its trade with Iran, the only way Congress has been able to impose new sanctions is by threatening other countries, some of them allies, with sanctions unless they stop their business relations with Iran. Sometimes, we have actually punished their companies with fines. Many countries resent this. Cutting off trade with Iran hurts other countries’ economies and they do not like being pushed around. This harms our relations with other countries, including friends and allies. We need to face the fact that, whether we like it or not, our allies and other Members of the UN Security Council have signed the deal with Iran. The idea that the US is going to get other countries to go along with its plan for Iran by threatening not to do business with them is just not going to work.



### CRITIQUE: Ramping Up Sanctions



### Renegotiating the Deal

Six in ten found convincing the argument that Congress should tell the administration to renegotiate the deal to get better terms.

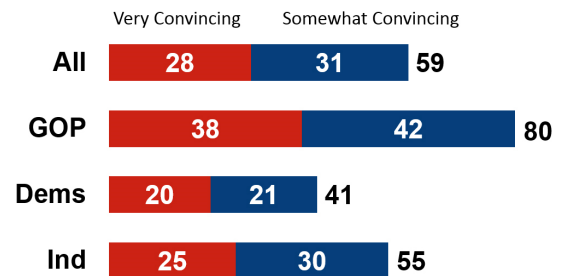
- However, a larger two-thirds (including nearly six in ten Republicans) found convincing the argument that this is not realistic.
- Asked how likely it is that the other permanent members of the UN Security Council would agree to this plan, a majority said that it was not likely.
- Asked how likely it is that Iran would agree to return to negotiations and make concessions, eight in ten said it was not likely.

The next proposal argued that Congress should reject the deal, try to keep sanctions in place, and demand that the administration try to renew negotiations with greater resolve to extract concessions. This argument was found convincing by 59%, but a majority of Democrats (58%) said it was unconvincing. Though four in five Republicans (80%) found it convincing, independents were lower, at 55%, than the full sample.

**PROPOSAL:** The US Congress should reject the nuclear deal with Iran and do whatever it can to keep sanctions in place. Congress should tell the administration to try to renew negotiations with Iran so as to get better terms. Negotiators would then seek to get even tighter limits on Iran's enrichment activities, to extend time limits on the terms of the deal, and to ensure that IAEA inspectors have true anytime/anywhere inspections. Sanctions on Iran would remain in place or tightened

further until a better deal is reached. With the threat of continued or increased sanctions and a greater resolve in the negotiations we will be effective in extracting more concessions.

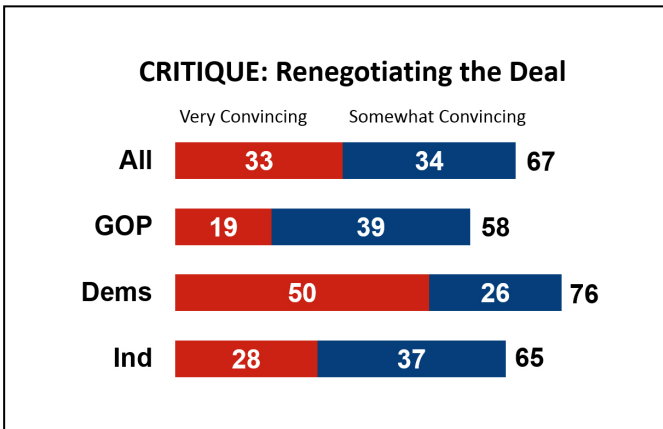
### PROPOSAL: Renegotiating the Deal



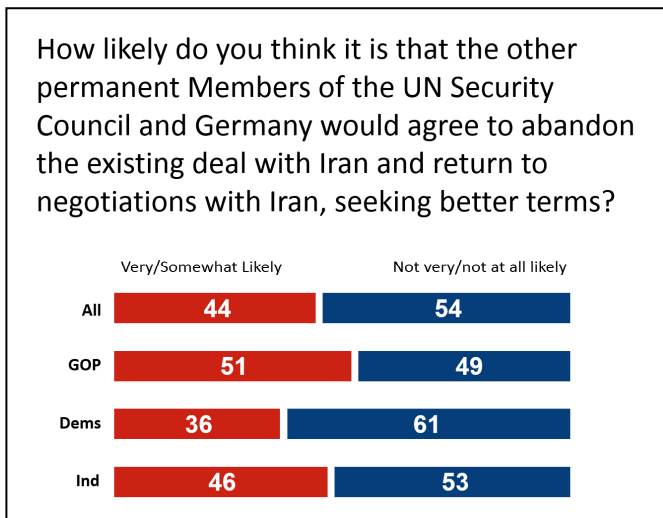
The critique of the proposal argued that the US was unlikely to drag other world powers—much less Iran—back to the negotiating table, and that sanctions would fall apart instead and Iran would be less constrained eventually. Two thirds (67%) found this rebuttal convincing (33% very)—eight points more than for the proposal. This was a bipartisan reaction, including 58% of Republicans and 76% of Democrats.

**CRITIQUE:** This proposal is simply unrealistic. It is extremely unlikely that the other permanent Members of the UN Security Council, especially China and Russia, after years of negotiations, would simply abandon the existing deal and reopen negotiations with Iran because the US changed its mind. It is equally unlikely that Iran would agree to reopen negotiations or would be willing to show any greater flexibility. Other countries that are already gearing up to do business with Iran are unlikely to want to reverse course because the US changed its mind. Many countries would be annoyed with the US. The most likely scenario is that the sanctions against Iran would simply fall apart, and the US and its allies would be divided. In the end, Iran would be less constrained than it is now and much less constrained than it would be under the deal.

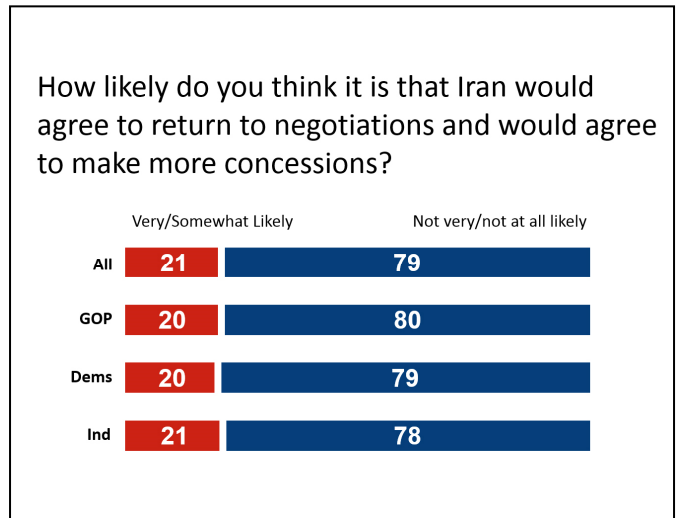




Panelists were then asked two questions about likelihood of success. The first asked how likely it is that the P5+1 would agree to abandon the existing deal and return to negotiations. A 54% majority thought this unlikely, while 44% thought it likely. Majorities of Democrats (61%) and independents (53%) thought it unlikely, while the prospect divided Republicans.



Panelists were then asked, “How likely do you think it is that Iran would agree to return to negotiations and would agree to make more concessions?” Four in five thought this unlikely (79%), and there was no party differentiation.



### Using Military Threats

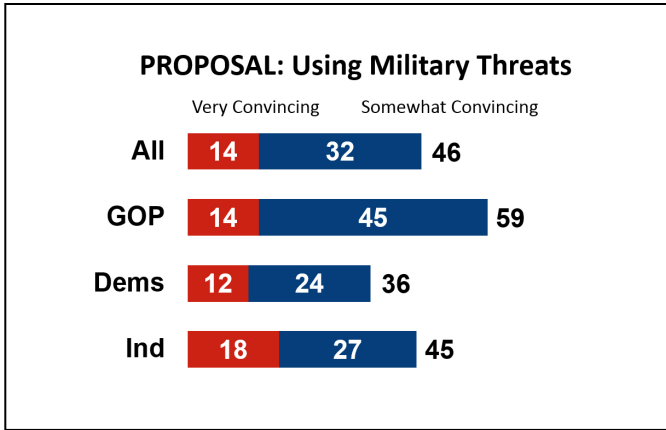
**The argument for using military threats against Iran to get it to give up its nuclear enrichment program and allow anytime/anywhere inspections was found unconvincing by a modest majority, while the argument against this policy was found convincing by more than seven in ten. Eight in ten thought it was unlikely that Iran would capitulate in response to military threats.**

The final alternative proposal relied on military means, arguing that Congress should reject the deal and the US should threaten military strikes on Iran’s nuclear sites unless Iran agrees to US demands. Refusal would be met with escalation. This was found unconvincing by a modest majority (52%), but six in ten Republicans did find it convincing (59%). It was unconvincing to 64% of Democrats and 54% of independents.

**PROPOSAL:** The US Congress should reject the deal with Iran. Rather, the US should use its military power as a means of assuring that Iran gives up its enrichment program and any possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons. First, we should threaten them with military strikes against those nuclear sites unless they agree to give up their program and allow full inspections on our terms for an indefinite period. If they do not agree, we should proceed to strike those sites. If they still do not agree and start to move their nuclear facilities underground, we need to be ready to escalate our military attacks further until they relent. Military

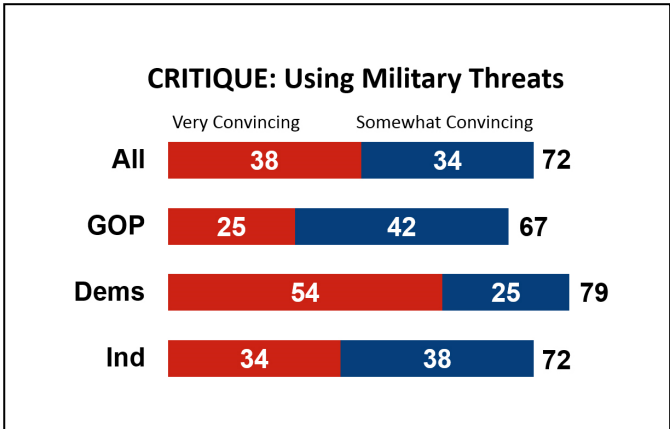


conflict with Iran would not be a good thing for the US, but a nuclear-armed Iran would be worse.

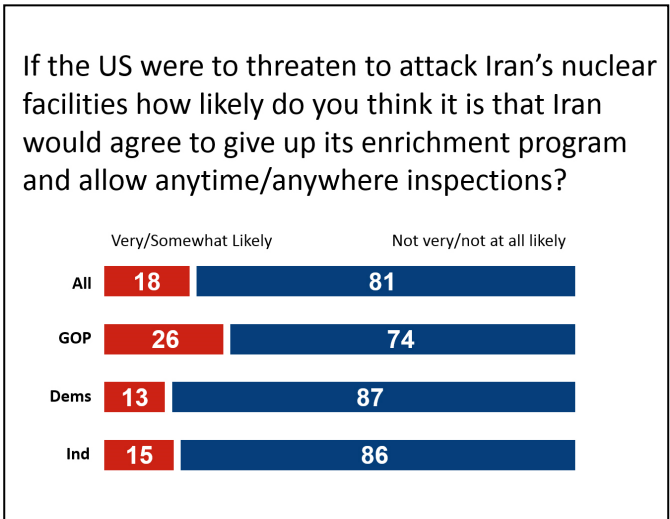


The critique of this proposal called it “extremely dangerous” and said it could lead to a situation in which the US, without allies, had to invade a vast, well-populated and determined country in order to achieve its objectives. This argument was found convincing by seven in ten (72%), including party majorities: two thirds of Republicans (67%), four in five Democrats (79%), and seven in ten independents (72%).

**CRITIQUE:** This is an extremely dangerous idea. The chances that Iran will capitulate in the face of military threats are low. When Iraq attacked and moved into Iran with superior military power in 1980, Iran fought back hard, suffered millions of casualties and regained all its territory. If we attack Iran’s nuclear sites they are unlikely to capitulate. They will surely rebuild those facilities underground, and most likely with the determination to build a nuclear weapon to defend themselves. At that point our only options would be to accept their building a nuclear weapon, or invade the country. Since Iran is more than twice the size of Iraq, this would be extraordinarily difficult and costly, and chances are that the US would be pretty much by itself in this effort. Surely, it makes more sense to first try and see if we can make the current deal with Iran work out.



Panelists were then asked how likely they thought it was that threats to attack Iran’s nuclear sites would lead Iran to give up its enrichment program and allow anytime/anywhere inspections. Eight in ten (81%) believed success was unlikely, and only a quarter of Republicans (26%) thought success likely. Both Democrats and independents approached nine in ten (86-87%) viewing success as unlikely.





**RE-ASSESSING THE OPTIONS SEPARATELY**

**After considering the various arguments and options, panelists reassessed the options separately. Approving the deal was found slightly more acceptable, and not approving the deal slightly less so.**

After this deliberation on the Iran deal and the alternatives to Congress approving of it, panelists were asked how they would feel on a 0-10 scale if Congress were to approve or disapprove of the international agreement. A number of small but statistically significant changes occurred.

Approving of the deal became slightly more acceptable. The mean score moved from 5.1 to 5.3 with those regarding approval as at least tolerable (5 or higher) rising from 61% to 63%. Among Republicans, the mean score moved from 3.3 to 3.6, with the percentage regarding it as at least tolerable rising from 40% to 44%. Among independents, the mean scores moved up from 5.3 to 5.7, with those finding it tolerable going from 63% to 71%.

Asked to reassess Congress disapproving of the deal, the mean score moved down, from 5.6 to 5.1, with the percentage finding it tolerable dropping from 59% to 58% (those saying “acceptable” dropped from 47% to 42%). Republicans’ mean moved down from 7.6 to 7.0, with those finding it tolerable dropping from 83% to 79% and Democrats down from 3.9 to 3.5, with the percentage regarding it as at least tolerable dropping from 40% to 38%. Among Republicans, fewer found disapproval acceptable (71 down to 63%).

**FINAL RECOMMENDATION**

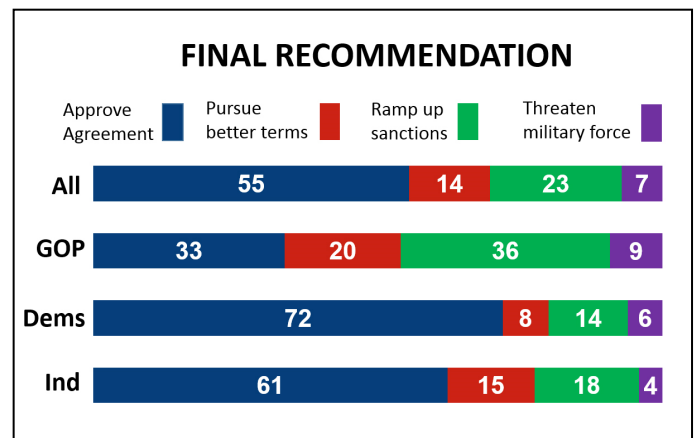
**Panelists were finally asked whether they would recommend that their Members of Congress approve of the deal. Those that did not recommend approval were offered other options. Ultimately 55% recommended approval, including 72% of Democrats, 61% of Independents and 33% of Republicans. Twenty-three percent recommended ramping up sanctions, 14% seeking to renegotiate the deal, and 7% using military threats.**

Panelists went through a two-stage process. They were first asked to choose whether to recommend approval

or disapproval of the deal. A modest 52% majority initially recommended approval, while 47% recommended disapproval. The result was very partisan – 69% of Democrats approved and 69% of Republicans disapproved. Among independents, three in five chose approval (60%).

Those who recommended disapproval were then offered the alternative options that they had evaluated earlier: ramping up sanctions higher until Iran ends enrichment; trying to start a renegotiation; or threatening military strikes on Iran’s nuclear sites and escalating if our demands are not met. They were also offered the option of approving the deal.

The most chosen alternative option was increasing sanctions (23%), followed by renegotiation (14%) and military pressure (7%). Another 3% decided on approval of the deal, and this included 3% of both Democrats and Republicans. This raised the total for approving the deal to 55%. Thus at the end of the process a clear majority concluded that approving of the deal would be the best approach and no other option received support by more than one in four.





**Voice Of the People** is a nonpartisan organization that seeks to re-anchor our democracy in its founding principles by giving ‘We the People’ a greater role in government. VOP uses innovative methods and technology to give the American people a more effective voice in the policymaking process. VOP is working to urge Congress to take these new methods to scale so that Members of Congress have a large, scientifically-selected, representative sample of their constituents—called a Citizen Cabinet—to be consulted on current issues and providing a voice that accurately reflects the values and priorities of their district or state.



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

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SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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Allison Stettler managed the design and production of the report with assistance from Antje Williams and Meaza Getachew.