

Americans Favor Deal with Iran; Willing to Back with Force

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A majority of Americans support the broad outlines of an agreement with Iran to limit its nuclear program to civilian uses, according to results from the May 25-June 17, 2015 Chicago Council Survey. While the public prefers a diplomatic solution, majorities also appear willing to use force to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear state.

- Six in ten Americans favor the framework of an agreement with Iran.
- Two thirds support using US troops to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.
- Nearly six in ten support US airstrikes against Iranian nuclear facilities if Iran violates the deal.

A majority of Americans support the outlines of a nuclear agreement with Iran when it is described as a tradeoff between the United States easing some economic sanctions against Iran, and Iran limiting its nuclear enrichment and development, increasing access to international inspectors, and extending the breakout time to develop a nuclear weapon (59%). Just over a third (36%) oppose the agreement.

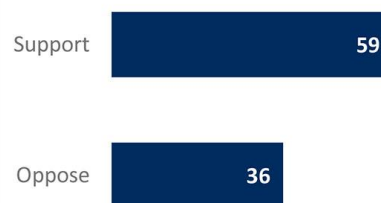
If Iran “commits a major violation of this agreement,” solid majorities would support the United States imposing tighter economic sanctions on Iran (80%) and continuing diplomatic efforts (71%).

At the same time, in principle, Americans seem willing to use force to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Before any

Nuclear Deal with Iran

As you may know, the U.S. and other countries recently reached the outlines of an agreement with Iran that will ease some of the economic sanctions against Iran. In exchange, Iran will limit its nuclear enrichment capacity and research and development for ten years, give international inspectors greater access to nuclear facilities, and increase the time it would take for Iran to develop a nuclear weapon from 2-3 months to at least a year.

Do you support or oppose the outlines of this agreement?



2015 Chicago Council Survey
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mention of the current negotiations with Iran in the survey, two in three Americans said they would support “the use of US troops to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons” (67%), on par with opinion in 2014. If Iran violates the agreement, majorities would support the United States conducting cyber-attacks against Iran’s computer systems (60%) and airstrikes against Iran’s nuclear facilities (56%). Fewer support sending US troops to destroy Iran’s nuclear facilities (44% support, 51% oppose).

Majority of Americans Label Iran’s Nuclear Program a Critical Threat

Americans’ willingness to use force against Iran rests upon the perception that a nuclear Iran is a critical threat to the United States and a negative force in its region. The public rates the possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers (59%) and specifically Iran’s nuclear program (57%) among the seven most critical threats facing the United States. In addition, nearly eight in ten Americans say that Iran plays a somewhat negative (44%) or very negative (33%) role in the Middle East today.

Questions about Lasting Impact

If a deal is reached, Americans are unsure about its lasting effects. Only three in ten are confident that the agreement will prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons in the next ten years (29%; 69% are not), a finding consistent with [other surveys](#) on this issue. *Even those who support the agreement* tend to doubt its ability to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon in ten years (42% of deal supporters versus 9% of those who oppose the deal). While a slim majority of those who support the deal tend to think it will help Iran’s economy (54%) and improve the United States’ image (52%), fewer are confident that an agreement will improve Israel’s security (34%); improve political freedoms in Iran (28%); reduce Iranian support for terrorist groups (25%); and weaken Iran’s government (23%).

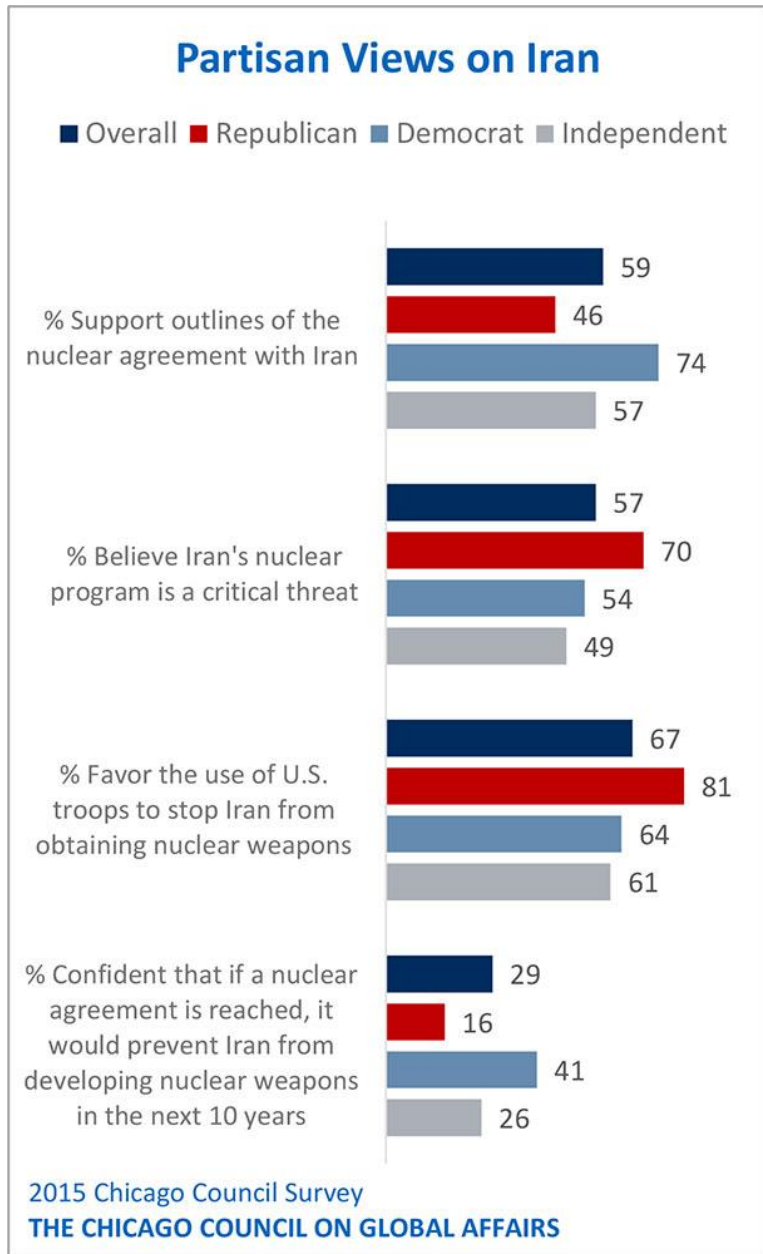
Partisan Differences on Deal, but Shared Support for Action if Iran Violates

There are some clear partisan differences among the public on attitudes toward a deal with Iran. A solid majority of self-described Democrats (74%) and a smaller majority of Independents (57%) favor the nuclear deal, while Republicans tend to oppose it (51%, 46% support). Likewise, Democrats (41%) are more confident than Republicans (16%) or Independents (26%) that the deal will prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons in the next decade. Democrats are also more confident than others in the deal’s ability to improve the image of the US in the world (53%), help the Iranian economy (52%), improve Israel’s security (47%) and improve political freedoms in Iran (38%).

While majorities across political parties support using US troops to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, only among Republicans do a majority (53%) favor sending US troops to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities if Iran commits a violation of the accord (53% versus 44% of Democrats and 37% of Independents).

About the Chicago Council Survey

The analysis in this report is based on data from the 2015 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy. The 2015 Chicago Council Survey was conducted by GfK Custom Research between May 25 and June 17, 2015 among a national sample of 2,034 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia using the KnowledgePanel, GfK's large-scale, nationwide online research panel. The margin of error ranges from ± 2.2 to ± 3.1 percentage points depending on the specific question, with higher margins of error for partisan subgroups.



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