

Trump's Deal with Iran Is Good Enough

Do Congressional Democrats care more about discrediting Trump than they do about ending the war?

The Progressive, by [Stephen Zunes](#) June 23, 2026

Many of the criticisms being leveled against the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the United States and Iran—namely, that it is not that great a deal—are accurate and worthy of attention. But under the disastrous set of circumstances resulting from the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, it is probably the best deal that can be realistically hoped for, given that Iran [clearly has](#) the upper hand. Unfortunately, that has not stopped some Washington politicians, including many prominent Democrats, from attempting to undermine it.

Iran has [suffered](#) enormously in terms of damage to its military and civilian infrastructure and the killing of many in its clerical, political, and military leadership, among many other thousands of deaths. In response, the regime has demonstrated an effective new form of asymmetrical warfare, in which relatively cheap drones can continue to [inflict](#) an enormous amount of damage on U.S. assets in the region, as well as on the military and civilian infrastructure of U.S. allies, even when more than 90 percent of such projectiles are successfully [intercepted](#) via more costly technologies.

The United States [cannot win](#) this war against Iran.

The deal outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding is decidedly of greater benefit to Iran than the terms agreed upon in the 2015 [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#)—an agreement primarily negotiated by the Obama Administration and signed by six other nations with the support of the United Nations and the European Union. That deal was unilaterally [broken off](#) by President Donald Trump during his first term.

Trump's new Memorandum of Understanding with Iran [calls](#) for Iran's enriched uranium to be blended down inside the country rather than removed to another location. In addition, as much as [\\$24 billion](#) in frozen Iranian assets will be released, although Trump has repeatedly [criticized](#) the JCPOA for unfreezing billions in Iranian assets. And, unlike the JCPOA, this deal lifts sanctions prior to Iran's implementing the nuclear provisions.

The Trump Administration [emphasizes](#) that its agreement forces Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and commits Iran to not developing a nuclear weapon. However, both of these were already the case prior to Trump's launch of the war four months ago on February 28.

For Republicans who attacked President Barack Obama for the JCPOA to now defend Trump's Memorandum of Understanding is beyond hypocrisy. But many Congressional Democrats are demonstrating their own hypocrisy in claiming that they oppose the war while actively undermining efforts to end it.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York, [referred](#) to the agreement as “the art of surrender.” Senator John Hickenlooper, Democrat of Colorado, [deemed](#) it “despicable.” Senator Cory Booker, Democrat of New Jersey, [said](#) it was a deal in which Iran gets all the benefits. Former Clinton Administration National Security Advisor Susan Rice [dubbed](#) it a “jaw-dropping, horrific surrender.” Senator Adam Schiff, Democrat of California, [said](#) it was “a thorough capitulation.” Representative Seth Moulton, Democrat of Massachusetts, similarly [claimed](#) it was “basically a surrender document.” And Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut, also [called](#) the agreement as an “unconditional surrender” by the United States, [insisting](#) it would be “dead on arrival in the Senate”—even though, since it is not a formal treaty, it [does not require](#) ratification or any other action on Capitol Hill.

Under international law, countries that engage in aggressive war are generally held liable for the damages inflicted upon the country they attack. The costs to Iranian society of the U.S.-Israeli bombing has been

[estimated](#) to be nearly \$300 billion. The Memorandum of Understanding does not call for reparations, but it does make reference to a reconstruction fund in that amount, apparently led by Arab Gulf states; payments will likely be in the form of loans with a decent return on investment for those Gulf states. It is not U.S. tax dollars that are being spent. It is not money that Trump is giving to Iran.

This has not stopped some Democratic leaders in Congress from claiming this is somehow a taxpayer-funded cash grant to the Iranian regime. Schumer [insists](#) the agreement would force the United States to “send Iran \$300 billion when economic needs are severe here at home.” Senator Amy Klobuchar, Democrat of Minnesota, falsely [claimed](#) these funds could be used to “end homelessness, fund cancer research for forty years, and give every child free pre-K for over seven years. Instead, Trump is sending it to Iran.” Blumenthal even [claimed](#) that Iran would be able to spend the money on supporting Hezbollah and other extremist Iranian allies, and rebuild its nuclear program. However, the investments would more likely actually be directed towards specific civilian infrastructure development projects under the supervision of the donor countries and private investors.

Misrepresenting arms control agreements is a time-honored tactic used by militarists. During the Cold War, these agreements frequently [prompted](#) rightwing claims that arms control locked in Soviet nuclear superiority. Trump himself [insisted](#) that the JCPOA, rather than make it physically impossible for Iran to develop a weapon, would have enabled them to do the opposite and destroy Israel and attack the United States.

By [falsely claiming](#) that the United States would pay Iran \$300 billion, Schumer (who also opposed the JCPOA) and other Democrats are essentially trying to mobilize popular opposition to the ending of the conflict.

The big question: What is the alternative?

A return to a war on Iran that brings retaliatory attacks on a half-dozen Middle Eastern nations? The continued devastating Israeli bombardment of Lebanon? The indefinite closure of the Strait of Hormuz and its disastrous global economic impact, particularly on families worldwide living under the poverty line?

Some Democrats recognize this reality. “There is no good way out of a bad war,” [noted](#) Senator Chris Van Hollen, Democrat of Maryland. “When you're in a hole, stop digging.” Similarly, Senator Chris Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut, [observed](#), “It’s a disaster, but it’s probably a necessary disaster.”

But the Democratic politicians who are joining rightwing Republicans in claims of “surrender” are assisting in the creation of a climate that might indeed lead the hawkish Trump Administration to break off the current agreement and return to war.

In many respects, this is nothing new. Democrats [played](#) an important role in working to undermine Obama’s efforts to negotiate a nuclear agreement with Iran, in discouraging President Joe Biden from returning to the deal, and in promoting a war in Iran that Trump finally brought to fruition in recent months.

Those of us interested in peace and security, however, should not encourage these actions. It is easy to criticize the agreement as a means of underscoring the tragedy of this reckless and illegal war, and to further discredit Trump as we approach the midterm elections. We must resist the understandable temptation to forward the memes, cartoons, and late-night jokes critical of the deal on our personal listservs and social media.

Doing so simply reinforces the efforts by Republican hawks, rightwing Zionists, and others who seek perpetual war. The unfortunate reality is that the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding is probably the best hope at this point to end—or at least suspend—this tragic conflict.