Iran Deal Will Impact Higher Ed

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On May 8, President Donald Trump announced that the United States was pulling out of the 2015 deal with Iran and other countries to limit the Islamic Republic's nuclear program. This deal was designed to slow and delay Iran's efforts to build a nuclear weapon by lifting economic sanctions and allowing international inspectors to exchange for a number of actions aimed at shutting down its uranium enrichment efforts and related programs.

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New forms of scientific collaboration could be coordinated, and new international centers of scientific research could be established.

Iran's recent past by Iran provides a number of examples of international collaborations between scientists. However, this year, longstanding efforts to establish scientific exchanges between Iran and the United States came to a halt. For example, workshops organized by the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) between 2010 and 2017 that involved hundreds of scientists and were aimed at bolstering collaborations in diverse field, including solar energy and water resource management, were frozen.

Because of the U.S. actions, hardliners in Iran now feel emboldened to defy U.S. and ally demands, which means that any international exchange with Iran will become more difficult, and that challenges to civil liberties in that country will become even harder to counter. And that will affect not just Iranians, but also international relations, which will mean that under such country made-up changes.

At the present time, there are at least five Iranian-American scientists and one Chinese-American scientist being detained by the Iranian regime. Some of them are still held in Iran's notorious Evin prison—nicknamed “Evin University” – for holding intellectual and political views that conflict with the reigning Islamic Revolution. Based upon history, it is not unlikely that Iran would impose even longer jail sentences, making the release of these Americans unlikely.

One of the prisoners, Yiwei Wang, a Chinese-American graduate student at Princeton University, was imprisoned in 2016 while researching in Tehran and sentenced to prison for “spying,” a charge he denies. Another U.S. citizen who has been impressed by the Tehran regime is Minad Tolbian. This Iranian-American businesswoman, a director of the Persepolis Heritage Foundation (PFHF), was arrested in Iran with others from that organization and accused of espionage. An Iranian-Canadian member of the group dealt in February, Karan Valatad, an Iranian-American academic agency in Tehran, was arrested with his wife in 2016 and accused of serving alcohol and holding mixed gender parties. He was later also accused of spying.

It is not uncommon for dictators to use the U.S. to assert U.S. influence, to stir up domestic political passions, and to benefit from the U.S. actions. "It is not unthinkable that the U.S. might use and no preventative maintenance is in order.

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Five watch from board consideration

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