

Quantum Suppression and the Collapse of the JCPOA

On how the 2018 withdrawal destroyed the interference pattern that was holding Iran stable

Chris George | Liminal Mind | 3 April 2026

This essay was developed on 3 April 2026 in the course of research for the Precision and Chaos: The Failure of Relational Architecture corpus. The framework of quantum suppression as a political stability mechanism, the framing of the JCPOA as an imposed superposition, and the characterisation of the 2018 withdrawal as a forced observation event are original theoretical contributions developed within the Liminal Mind practice. They emerged from the intersection of chaos theory, quantum mechanics, and systems research applied to geopolitical analysis.

There is a concept in quantum mechanics called the suppression of chaos. In classical systems, once a nonlinear process crosses the Feigenbaum point — the threshold at which period-doubling accelerates into full divergence — the system becomes unpredictable exponentially. There is no mechanism to prevent it. Chaos is the destination.

But in quantum systems, something strange happens. When a system capable of superposition enters that same chaotic environment, the coexistence of multiple possible states generates wave interference. That interference smooths out the divergence. The chaos is suppressed — not resolved, not eliminated, but held in check by the productive tension between incompatible possibilities.

I want to argue that this is not merely a physical phenomenon. It describes, with uncomfortable precision, how certain human systems maintain stability. And it explains — more completely than conventional analysis has managed — both why the 2015 Iran nuclear deal worked and why its collapse in 2018 made the current war structurally inevitable.

Superposition as political stability

Complex human systems — states, institutions, constitutional settlements — do not always maintain stability by resolving their internal contradictions. Sometimes they maintain it by suspending them. By holding multiple mutually exclusive possibilities in simultaneous coexistence. The interference between incompatible states dampens the exponential divergence that either definite state would produce on its own.

The Good Friday Agreement held Northern Ireland in superposition between British sovereignty and Irish unity aspiration. It never resolved the contradiction. It suspended it. The interference between incompatible constitutional claims generated the stability that three decades of attempted resolution had failed to produce. Taiwan has been held in superposition for seventy years — three mutually incompatible readings of sovereignty coexisting without collapse — because no party has yet forced a definitive observation. The European Union is simultaneously a union of sovereign states and a nascent federal entity. That ambiguity is not a design flaw. It is the stability mechanism.

In each case, the system is stable not because the contradictions have been resolved but because they haven't been. The coexistence of incompatible possibilities generates the interference that suppresses chaos. Force observation — collapse the superposition into a single definite classical state — and you release the divergence that the superposition had been suppressing.

The JCPOA as imposed superposition

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was, in this framework, the closest the international community has come to successfully imposing quantum suppression on a volatile state system.

During the active years of the deal — 2015 to 2018 — Iran existed in two competing states simultaneously. It was a nation retaining and developing its civilian nuclear capacity. It was also a nation reintegrating into the global economy, with sanctions relief, returning investment, and the material reality of engagement. These were not compatible positions. They implied different futures, different identities, different power structures. And yet they coexisted.

That coexistence generated productive interference within the Iranian political system. Because the economic benefits of engagement were real and visible, reformists could not be fully suppressed. They had material evidence that the reformist attractor existed — that a future of normalisation was genuinely available. Conversely, because Iran retained its nuclear programme, hardliners lacked the leverage to fully mobilise the siege mentality that is their natural operating mode. The deal had not forced them to surrender. It had merely suspended the conflict.

The JCPOA did not resolve Iran's identity or geopolitical posture. It held them in superposition. And that suspension was the stability.

The 2018 withdrawal as forced observation

The United States' unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018 was, in the precise technical sense, a forced observation event.

In quantum mechanics, observation collapses superposition. The act of measuring a system forces it into one of its possible states. The other possibilities don't gradually fade — they vanish. The system is now classical. Definite. And if the underlying dynamics were chaotic, the suppression that superposition had provided is gone.

The withdrawal told the Iranian system something definitive: the reformist attractor is not real. Engagement will always be revoked. The economic normalisation state is not a stable possibility — it is a temporary condition that will be terminated when the political configuration of the external party changes. The measurement had been made. The observation was complete.

With the reformist state collapsed, the interference patterns that had been suppressing hardline dominance dissolved. There was no longer a competing possibility generating productive tension. The hardline classical state — siege posture, maximum resistance, internal repression, proxy escalation — became the only stable attractor available. Not because hardliners won an argument. Because the other argument's material basis had been eliminated.

The sequence that followed — the Soleimani assassination, maximum pressure, the 2025 twelve-day war, and ultimately Operation Epic Fury in February 2026 — is the exponential divergence of a system that lost its quantum suppression in 2018. Each event is a further measurement. Each measurement makes reimposition of superposition harder. The system becomes progressively more classical, more definite, more chaotic in the technical sense — deterministic behaviour that has become unpredictable because small differences amplify without bound.

Why there is no path back that resembles the original deal

This framework produces an uncomfortable conclusion that conventional diplomatic analysis tends to avoid.

You cannot reimpose superposition using the same measurement that collapsed it. The Iranian system has already observed — definitively, through the full sequence of events from 2018 to 2026 — that the reformist attractor is not a genuine stable state. Offering a new JCPOA-like agreement does not restore the superposition. It offers a state that the system has already measured as unreal. The interference pattern cannot reform around a possibility that has been empirically refuted.

What reimposition of quantum suppression would actually require is a different set of counterparties — actors whose measurement history against Iran does not include the forced observations of the past eight years. Actors who can make the engagement state credibly real again because they have not already proven it unreal.

China has economic relationships, no recent military action against Iran, and strong strategic interest in Hormuz stability. Gulf states — Saudi Arabia particularly, following

the 2023 normalisation — have demonstrated they can operate outside the US-Israel framework when their interests require it. Europe, if it could act with genuine strategic autonomy, has the economic weight to make normalisation materially credible.

A superposition imposed by a coalition that doesn't include the primary actors who forced the collapse might generate genuine interference — because the reformist state would have credibility that the existing measurement history cannot veto.

This is not a counsel of optimism. It is a structural analysis of what the physics of the situation actually requires. The precision instruments that destroyed the relational architecture of the Iranian state cannot rebuild it. The actors who collapsed the superposition cannot reimpose it. And without superposition, there is no interference. Without interference, there is no suppression. Without suppression, the system diverges.

What this means beyond Iran

The quantum suppression framework is not specific to Iran. It describes a general class of political stability — the kind maintained by suspension rather than resolution, by coexistence rather than clarity, by the productive tension of incompatible possibilities held simultaneously.

Taiwan, the Korean peninsula, the European Union, the Northern Ireland settlement, and — in a register that should concern us more than it apparently does — the current constitutional superposition of the United States presidency: all of these are systems whose stability depends on superposition remaining intact. All of them are susceptible to forced observation events. All of them, once observed, would release divergence that the superposition had been suppressing.

The Iran war is not only a regional conflict. It is a demonstration — visible to every actor in the international system — that forced observation is a viable and available tool. That superpositions can be collapsed. That the interference patterns maintaining stability elsewhere are not permanent features of the landscape.

Every precision strike is a measurement event. And at sufficient resolution, measurement does not produce control.

It produces collapse.

Chris George is a visual artist and systems researcher based in Wales, working under the practice name Liminal Mind. His current project, Quantum Memory, investigates embodied knowledge and what is lost when institutions forget. This essay is part of the Precision and Chaos: The Failure of Relational Architecture research corpus.

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