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Q&A | Iranian Ex-Diplomat: P5+1 'Wants Iran to Give Diamonds for Peanuts'

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by NOAH ARJOMAND

26 MAY 2012 21:44

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Former nuclear negotiation spokesman foresees little progress until West offers "proportionate reciprocation."

[interview] Dr. Seyed Hossein Mousavian is an Iranian career diplomat who served as ambassador to Germany during the Rafsanjani administration and then headed the Foreign Relations Committee of Iran's Supreme National Security Council under the Khatami administration. From 2003 to 2005, he was the spokesman for the Iranian nuclear negotiation team led by [Hassan Rowhani](#). Currently a visiting scholar at Princeton University, he is the author of the forthcoming book [The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: A Memoir](#).



Photo : Hossein Fatemi

FARS NEWS AGENCY

Mousavian responded by email to questions from Tehran Bureau about the results of the [negotiations over Iran's nuclear activities](#) held in Baghdad this week and the prospects for a deal that will resolve the standoff between the Islamic Republic and the West.

In Baghdad this week, talks between Iran and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany once again came to a standstill. Iran once again proposed a broad package covering both nuclear and nonnuclear issues, while the P5+1 sought but was rebuffed on a more limited deal under which Iran would give up 20 percent enrichment of uranium in exchange for spare airplane parts, medical isotopes, and some nuclear safety cooperation. How do you think this disjuncture -- with the P5+1 arguing for limited but concrete steps and Iran arguing that the big picture must first be addressed -- can be overcome?

The core issue is with the P5+1, which is not ready for proportionate reciprocation in a step-by-step plan. They want Iran to give diamonds in return for peanuts. They are asking Iran to give up 20% enrichment and export all stockpiles, [as well as] cooperate with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] on the possible military dimension issues, in return for meager incentives such as the sale of spare parts for civilian planes.

For the Iranians to address the IAEA's [concerns over] possible military dimension issues, they would have to practically implement the Additional Protocol [of the [IAEA Safeguards Agreement](#)] and go even beyond these measures. This concession in addition to confidence-building measures on 20% enrichment are the maximum the Iranians could accept, [and] only within the framework of a step-by-step and clear picture of the reciprocation by the P5+1, which should include the following:

1. Recognizing the rights of Iran to enrichment under the NPT
2. Gradual lifting of sanctions within the framework of the step-by-step plan
3. Normaliz[ing] the Iranian nuclear file at the IAEA and UNSC [U.N. Security Council]

In what areas, both nuclear and nonnuclear, do you believe the first steps toward a deal could realistically be taken?

If confidence building measures on 20% enrichment is the primary goal of the P5+1, then they should be prepared to put aside the sanctions on the Iranian Central Bank and oil. If the IAEA's possible military dimension issues are the core concern, then the P5+1 should be ready to recognize the rights of Iran [to] enrichment as reciprocation, since Iran would have to implement the Additional Protocol and even measures beyond it.

Will Iran agree to give up or freeze any part of its enrichment activities before recently imposed sanctions, most notably an E.U. oil embargo, are eased? Will the P5+1 agree to ease any sanctions before Iran gives up at least part of its enrichment activities and stockpile of enriched uranium? Have the oil embargo and Iran's economic situation changed its leaders' calculus?

The steps to be taken by Iran have to be proportionally reciprocated by the P5+1. The point is that the Iranians won't make major concessions under threats and further pressure tactics by the West would be counterproductive, as it ultimately will lead to a hardened position by the Iranians.

Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suggested that Iran's participation in negotiations was merely a stalling tactic, saying, "It looks as though they see these talks as another opportunity to deceive and delay just like North Korea did for years." Has the duration of talks itself, along with accusations of stalling by hawks in Israel and the U.S., affected Iran's diplomatic approach or increased pressure on the negotiation team to produce results?

For nonproliferation, it is better for the Israelis not to weigh in [on] the Iranian nuclear dossier. Because Iran is a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), has allowed IAEA inspectors into the country, does not possess nuclear weapons, and there is no evidence of [an] Iranian weaponized nuclear program. While Israel is not a member of the NPT, does not permit IAEA inspections of its facilities, and possesses nuclear weapons.

Is the upcoming presidential election in the United States a consideration for Iran in its approach to the nuclear talks?

No.

What are the continued diplomatic stalemate's implications for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency?

This has no bearing, as the ultimate decision-maker in the nuclear affairs is the Supreme Leader.

Is there significance to the choice of Moscow for the next round of talks? How do Iran's leaders view Russia and China's roles in the most recent rounds of negotiations in Istanbul and now Baghdad? What do you think will happen at the talks in Moscow next month?

The Russians and the Chinese have [been] shown to be more moderate in their approach in the nuclear negotiations; in particular, the Russian proposals are more realistic compared to the Western package. I hope that this fact will facilitate a face-saving compromise in the next round of talks in Moscow.

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**1979RevolutionWitness** • a year ago

He is an eloquent, well-spoken, individual with an admirable mastery of English who tells lies, like many Persians do, to survive, to be polite, etc. He is as untrustworthy as he is charming. The facts about the regime's modus operandi and its nuclear programme tell a very different story: they don't need nuclear energy (2nd largest gas reserves in world), but they are a proud people, and the leadership wouldn't mind being one screw-turn away from having a nuclear bomb if it helped to make the regime invulnerable to being overthrown by outside forces. Taqqiyya makes the utterances of the Supreme Leader only for naive morons in the West (particularly the type of people who protested against the deployment of cruise missiles before the Soviet Union collapsed). It's a pity a journalist of Persian extraction like Christianne Amanpour gave him such an easy time in the recent CNN interview. "Peanuts for diamonds". Lol. Uranium enrichment is 1950s technology, and it is no diamond. Iran is the least safe place in the world to have nuclear power stations (remember the Bam earthquake?). You don't build a secret impregnable underground enrichment centre unless you fear your opponents won't believe your lies.

2 | [Share](#)**Kharmagas** • a year ago

U.S team and their AIPAC masters think time is on their side:

<http://the-diplomat.com/2012/0...>

I very much doubt so, the AIPAC writer says in the above article:

"The EU oil sanctions, which will go into effect on July 1, will at the very least be a significant psychological blow to Iran's economy."

"psychological blow to Iran's economy....", Iran has been taking those psychological blows for past thirty+ years!

1 | [Share](#)**sir_mixxalot** • a year ago

Dr. Mousavian, you may be interested to read the OpEd in CSMonitor that backs up your view:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Comme...>

2 | [Share](#)**Sassan** • a year ago

Why is this terrorist even allowed to be in the United States in the first place? He was the head embassy rep when the terrorist attacks against the Kurds took place at the Mykonos restaurant in Germany against the Kurds. He is a TERRORIST.

14 | [Share](#)**Sassan** → Sassan • a year ago

Didn't mean to be redundant and repeat myself by mentioning Kurds twice :P

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