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OPINION

Four scenarios to strike a final nuclear deal with Iran

by **Seyed Hossein Mousavian** (</profiles/m/seyed-hossein-mousavian.html>) - [@ajam](http://www.twitter.com/ajam) (<http://www.twitter.com/ajam>)

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Insistence on limiting Tehran's nuclear capacity risks further estrangement

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U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, left, and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, right, attend a meeting of P5+1 countries at the U.N. headquarters in New York on Sept. 26, 2013. Jason DeCrow/AP

Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany (the P5+1) are trying to strike a comprehensive deal by July 2014 to resolve a decade-old Iranian nuclear dilemma. Meeting in Vienna last month (<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/2/18/iran-talks-on-finalnucleardealbegindespitedampenedoptimism.html>), Iran and the world powers achieved substantive progress, including an agreement on a framework, plan of action and timetable for the next round of talks.

However, significant differences still divide the two sides. The P5+1 countries, the United States in particular, want to limit Iran's nuclear program as its core strategy, whereas Iran seeks to formulize the deal based on transparency by providing assurances about the peaceful nature of its nuclear program.

The world powers are seeking a consensus that allows Iran to retain only a small and indigenous (<http://iranmatters.belfercenter.org/blog/what-should-enrichment-end-state-look-collection-proposals>) uranium enrichment program. Therefore they want to impose significant physical limits on the heavy water facilities, the number and type of centrifuges, the level of enrichment, the amount of stockpiled enriched uranium and the number of Tehran's nuclear enrichment facilities — as well as install enhanced monitoring and verification measures.

Operationally, this would require Iran to shut down its heavy water facility in Arak, close the Fordow (<http://www.nti.org/facilities/165/>) fuel enrichment facility, dismantle a considerable number of its existing 20,000 centrifuges, halt enrichment beyond 5 percent (well under the standard 20 percent that can easily be converted to weapons-grade levels), export or convert most of its existing stockpile of enriched uranium hexafluoride, limit the development of more advanced centrifuge machines and forgo all of its reprocessing facilities.

However, these are demands that go beyond existing international nonproliferation commitments, and Iran is unlikely to accept.

Unfair demands

By limiting Iran's nuclear development, the world powers seek to eliminate the risk of diversion and minimize the chance that Tehran will achieve breakout capability — the ability to build a nuclear bomb from stockpiles of highly enriched uranium — undetected.

Iran's strategy (<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/111356-iran-ready-to-take-the-path-of-transparency-zarif>) of transparency aims to boost confidence. Under both the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran, as a member state, is committed to transparency in its nuclear program, with no exceptions.

To eliminate the risk of nuclear weaponization, the IAEA recommends three transparency arrangements. The obligatory Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (http://www.iaea.org/safeguards/documents/safeg_system.pdf), which allows the agency to verify that no significant quantities of nuclear materials are diverted from peaceful activities toward the manufacture of nuclear weapons, and two voluntary arrangements known as the Additional Protocol

(<http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/IAEAProtocol>) (AP) and Subsidiary Arrangements (https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/23153/1/gupea_2077_23153_1.pdf) Code 3.1, aimed at gathering a comprehensive picture of a state's nuclear and nuclear-related activities and provide amplifying detail for safeguards procedures and obligations to ensure the maximum level of transparency.

The world powers' demands for Iran go well beyond the NPT and IAEA rules. The P5+1 countries cite IAEA resolutions that confirmed Iran's noncompliance with the NPT to justify their stringent demands. However, since the NPT was adopted in 1968, some other members, such as Egypt (https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_01-02/Goldschmidt), South Korea (https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_01-02/Goldschmidt) and Romania (http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_5/Carlson), have been found noncompliant, yet none were treated the way Iran has been.

“ The possibility of military confrontation with Iran is real if negotiators cannot agree on a final deal. ”

The world powers' limiting strategy poses a risk of pushing Iran to abandon its agreement with the P5+1, expel the IAEA inspectors, disable the IAEA's monitoring equipment and ultimately build bombs. The bottom line is, the possibility of military confrontation with Iran is real if negotiators cannot agree on a final deal. Such confrontation could unleash terrible regional and international consequences. The world powers and Iran consider the following four scenarios in order to secure a final deal.

First, making Iran's fatwa, or edict, operational (<http://www.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/CairoReview/Lists/Articles/Attachments/374/CR10-%20Mousavian.pdf>). Iran is committed (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/obama-rouhani-should-talk-more-often.html>) to a religious decree issued (<http://www.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/CairoReview/Lists/Articles/Attachments/374/CR10-%20Mousavian.pdf>) by the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei that bans the production, stockpiling and use of all weapons of mass destruction. Respecting its rights to peaceful nuclear technology means that Iran would have no reason to leave the NPT. This eliminates fears of an abrupt shutdown of monitoring the country's nuclear program, because Iran would not withdraw from the NPT. In such eventuality, Iran and the world powers would forgo the limiting issues and discuss only transparency measures in the final deal.

Second, cooperating on a broad range of issues, including Iran's enormous energy demands and potential. Such engagement and cooperation would remove all anxieties, not least Iran's security concerns and the world powers' fear that the Iranian nuclear program will be diverted toward weaponization.

Third, setting a realistic scope on limits to Iran's nuclear program. Instead of making impossible demands, such as the closure of Iran's enrichment site in Fordow or heavy water facilities in Arak, Iran and the P5+1 should agree on realistic limits (<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/891b80d0-967f-11e3-945d->

00144feab7de.html#axzz2uNTjTAju) guaranteeing nonproliferation for a specific confidence-building period. This would enable the IAEA enough time to address all technical ambiguities on the Iranian nuclear program.

Finally, considering a comprehensive vision for a nuclear-free Persian Gulf and Middle East. To actualize such a broad agenda, the world powers should first seek an agreement with Iran acceptable to other regional countries and then use the final deal with Iran as a model for the entire region.

Toward that end, the International Panel for Fissile Material, a team of independent nuclear experts from 15 countries, has proposed (<http://fissilematerials.org/library/rr11.pdf>) sensible measures: a ban on the separation or use of plutonium and uranium-233, restrictions on the use of high enriched uranium as a reactor fuel, limitations on uranium enrichment to less than 6 percent and agreement to a just-in-time system of uranium production rather than stockpiling enriched uranium. Both sides should agree to Iran's adopting these courses of action.

Ambassador Seyed Hossein Mousavian is Research Scholar in the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University. He served as head of the Foreign Relations Committee of Iran's National Security Council from 1997 to 2005 and spokesman of Iran's nuclear file 2003 to 2005. His latest book, "Iran and the United States: An Insider's View on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace" will be released in May 2014.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera America's editorial policy.

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Jan gil

8 hours ago

For once, I will keep my opinions to myself. Inasmuch as I can comprehend, this op-ed piece seems reasonable to me.

⌵

REPLY

0



Ray Doherty

21 hours ago

The author outlines very reasonable proposals that guarantee transparency and confidence building. Let's hope that moderates on both sides prevail. Given the undue influence of AIPAC and the hard line Israeli lobby on U.S. national security decisions, it remains to be seen if the P5 + 1 are able to make a deal with Iran.

⌵

REPLY

0



Jan Wood

22 hours ago

Think what the Middle East would look like if Iran and Israel found a way to become trading partners? The impact would be broad and profound.

⌵

REPLY

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Ted Reynolds

1 day ago

These proposals seem eminently sane to me. Of course, I'm not the one making the decisions.

⌵

REPLY

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