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CORRECTED-Book Talk: Iran "insider" offers roadmap for U.S.-Iran peace

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(In Jan 29 item, corrects to add dropped name of co-author in 4th paragraph)

By [Parisa Hafezi](#)

ANKARA, Jan 29 (Reuters) - Hossein Mousavian thinks a big reason Iran has not struck a deal with six major powers over its nuclear programme boils down to a lack of understanding between Tehran and Washington, and a lack of U.S. appreciation for gestures Iran has made.

He's in a position to know because he has held sensitive roles as a member of Iran's National Security Council and as a senior nuclear negotiator when President Hassan Rouhani served as the chief negotiator. Although Rouhani's stance was regarded as pragmatic, the nuclear talks broke down in 2005.

Mousavian studied in the United States before Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979, the year when Iranian students took 52 Americans hostage at the U.S. embassy in Tehran.

He says his book, "Iran and the United States: An Insider's View on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace", written together with Shahr Shahidsaless, aims to explain the differences he sees as pre-dating their capture.

"The hostage crisis marks the Big Bang ostensibly as the beginning of the hostile relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States," Mousavian told Reuters.

"Many of today's points of contention ... either did not exist or were insignificant at that time. There was no competition over hegemony in the region between the two countries, cultural differences had not emerged, the issue of Israel was a non-factor and there was no dispute over Iran's nuclear programme."

Mousavian says his book looks back to illustrate "how flawed analysis on both sides has created a cycle of mistrust that has not been addressed -- let alone broken -- to this date.

"In fact, it has intensified as a result of coercive policies on the part of the United States," he said.

As an example of how the United States and Iran seem to pass like ships in the night, his book notes that Iran worked with the United States in 2001 to fight against the Taliban, toppled by a U.S.-led military campaign after al Qaeda's September 11 attacks on U.S. cities. But George W. Bush's "axis of evil" rhetoric squelched any hopes of a rapprochement with Iran.

"The current state of Iran-U.S. relations is shaky and unsustainable," he told Reuters. "The two are locked in a conflict spiral which, if not addressed, could end in a destructive war."

Mousavian became a scapegoat for hardline former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. A Tehran court acquitted him of treason charges, but he was banned from holding a diplomatic position for five years. Since 2009, he has been teaching at Princeton University.

Q: What motivated you to write this book?

A: Primarily to present a fresh and untold view from Tehran ... in hopes of better understanding the root causes ... and eventually bringing the Iran-U.S. conflict to an end.

Q: What makes your book different from others about this subject?

A: Almost all information available on Iran-U.S. relations is based on information first told, heard and echoed in the West.

Q: What is your proposed roadmap to peace?

A: The United States should first decide their end goal. If the end goal is to make peace with Iran, then this book offers a feasible, comprehensive, phase-by-phase process ... The road to peace is certainly a bumpy one, but ... even factors such as Iran-Israel hostilities are not insurmountable hurdles for a comprehensive deal between Iran and the United States. (Editing by Michael Roddy and Ruth Pitchford)

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