

Iran ready for a nuclear deal: Column

Seyed Hossein Mousavian 3:17 p.m. EST February 6, 2015

Iran fulfilled its nuclear promises: Time for America to make good on sanctions



(Photo: LAURENT GILLIERON, EPA)

In January, Iran and major powers ended [five days of nuclear talks in Geneva and Paris](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-01-19/iran-risks-rise-as-stumbling-talks-push-sanctions-clamor) (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-01-19/iran-risks-rise-as-stumbling-talks-push-sanctions-clamor>), including lengthy meetings between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif. Negotiators made "limited progress" at nuclear talks, [agreed to step up efforts](http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/18/us-iran-nuclear-talks-idUSKBN0KR0E820150118) (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/18/us-iran-nuclear-talks-idUSKBN0KR0E820150118>) and meet in February.

As it appears, things are moving, and the chances for clinching a final deal look fairly good. But, only if the two sides can successfully resolve the two key remaining points of contention: Iran's enrichment capacity and the timetable for lifting sanctions. From the American side, the onus is on Iran. "Unless Supreme Leader Khamenei

throws his weight behind the adjustments in Iran's negotiating positions that are necessary to reach a compromise with the P5+1 countries, there will be no agreement", as seen by Robert Einhorn, the former US nuclear negotiator. This doesn't say it all though.

Almost everybody, in and out of the negotiating teams, admit that unprecedented progress has been made in the extremely tough process. As [Wendy Sherman has put it](http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2014/233306.htm) (<http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2014/233306.htm>): "We have made impressive progress on issues that originally seemed intractable." Secretary [Kerry's recent remark](http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/01/08/whats-holding-up-the-iran-nuclear-deal) (<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/01/08/whats-holding-up-the-iran-nuclear-deal>)s are also very much encouraging: "We have seen new ideas surface, flexibility emerge, that could, I repeat, could help resolve some issues that had been intractable." Who should really get the credit for the flexibilities that have made progress possible?

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First, according to the letter and spirit of the [Joint Plan of Action](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/25/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-deal-document.html) (<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/25/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-deal-document.html>) (JPOA) agreed between Iran and the world powers in November 2013, the comprehensive deal would be based on the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), laying out the rights and obligations of parties to the Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As stipulated by the NPT and other relevant international regulations, a treaty party would demonstrate the [maximum level of transparency](http://www.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/CairoReview/Pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=619) (<http://www.aucegypt.edu/GAPP/CairoReview/Pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=619>) by implementing the Nuclear Safeguards Agreement which is obligatory for all NPT members and the Additional Protocol and Subsidiary Arrangement Code 3.1 — which are voluntary. These three specific arrangements are the maximum measures the world powers can expect within the NPT. And the reassuring element in the process is having a clear understanding that Iran would be ready for such a level of commitment within the final deal. Quite a substantial flexibility on Iran's part and a major contribution towards a final deal.

Second, based on credible American reports, Iran's willingness to compromise on the following important elements of its nuclear program for [voluntary confidence-building purposes](http://nationalinterest.org/feature/iran-nuclear-deal-there-the-taking-11472) has been on the table (<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/iran-nuclear-deal-there-the-taking-11472>).

1. Technical conversions at the Arak heavy water facility to ensure significant reduction in the plutonium production capability.
2. Re-purposing the Fordow enrichment facility.
3. Capping the level of enrichment at 5%.
4. Conversion or dilution of most of the 20% enriched uranium.
5. Cooperation with the IAEA to resolve the Possible Military Dimensions issues (PMDs).
6. Conversion or export of the 5% enriched uranium beyond domestic needs.
7. Foregoing reprocessing activities at Arak heavy water facilities.
8. Reduction of the number of operational centrifuges from the current installed 22,000 to around 9,400.

Put together, all the above confidence-building measures — which no other NPT member has ever undertaken — should be reassuring enough for the world powers on verifiable transparency for the Iranian program and, more importantly, that the "presumed paths to the bomb" are effectively blocked.

That's the manifestation of Iranian goodwill, flexibility and compromise, a clear, unmistakable outcome of the Rouhani administration's outlook and determination, and the professional performance of the new negotiating team. As best characterized by the [German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Jan. 16](http://www.irna.ir/en/News/81466403/) (<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/81466403/>) at a press conference in Berlin, "since the arrival of Iran's present negotiating team, there came very good progress... talks have already entered a new decisive phase after one decade of negotiations."

Every keen observer of the Iranian scene is fully aware that this progress has enjoyed the blessing — and explicit open support— of the Supreme Leader . Tehran has already made good on its resolve to reach a comprehensive, lasting deal.

The onus is now on the other sides on the two sticky points: Iran's enrichment capacity and the timetable for lifting sanctions. Given that the contract with Russia to provide fuel for the Bushehr power plant expires in 2021 (<http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21633821-deal-be-done-both-sides-need-compromise-iran-must-give-more-ground-irans-choice>), a 5-7 year limit on the current operational centrifuges would enable Iran to produce the needed fuel domestically on time. Will President Obama exhibit the necessary audacity and decide on the Iran's practical enrichment capacity and lifting of the UN, multilateral and unilateral sanctions before his departure?

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