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IRAN

# Iran nuclear talks headed for overtime, predict experts

With the deadline for the P5+1 negotiation with Iran over its nuclear program approaching, DW asked seven experts for their take on the outcome. Most don't expect a breakthrough deal - but that doesn't have to be bad.



*DW: What do you think will be the likely outcome of the final round of nuclear talks - success, failure or extension and why?*

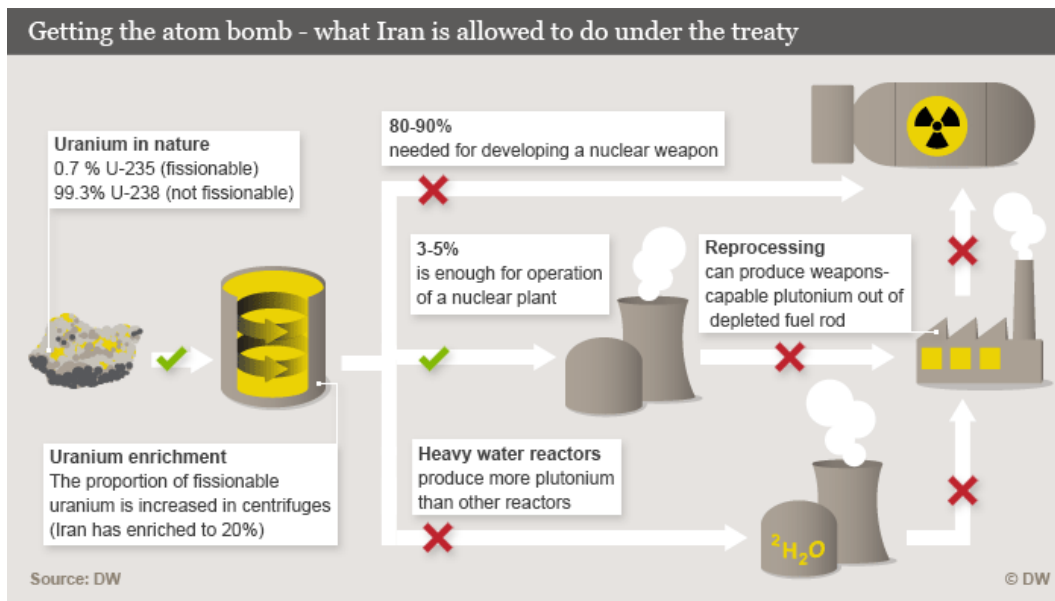
**Laura Rockwood, Section Head for non-proliferation at the IAEA from 1985 to 2014, now Senior Research Fellow, Project on Managing the Atom, at Harvard University:**

I think the most likely outcome of this round of nuclear talks is that it won't be the *final round of nuclear talks*. I believe there will be an agreement on an extension of the JPOA (Joint Plan of Action - the ed.), and perhaps an agreement on some broad elements of the longer term solution.

The best outcome would be a mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution that would ensure that Iran's nuclear program is exclusively peaceful - the stated aim of the current talks. But the parties aren't there yet. However, I don't believe that any of the parties are ready to abandon the process yet.

**Ali Vaez, Senior Iran Analyst at the International Crisis Group:**

It is unlikely that a fully-fledged agreement could be reached by the deadline. What is still possible, however, is a breakthrough that could justify adding more time to the clock. The reality is that the status quo is not perfect, but is preferable to its alternatives.



It is hard to believe that either side will allow a disagreement over plumbing to kill a deal so close to completion. The problem is that both sides are more driven by how to sell a deal to their domestic skeptics than how to get a deal.

**Oliver Thränert, Head of the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich:**

I think the delegations will sign a document at the final hour. Whether this will fly both in the US and Iran domestically is a different matter. It is obvious that the Obama administration badly needs a success story in terms of its foreign policy.

Iran - or more precisely President Rohani - needs an end to the international sanctions regime. [Russia wants to sell Iran nuclear reactors](#), which it hardly could do if the negotiations fail. China wants free access to Iranian oil. And the Europeans want a diplomatic solution in order to preserve the nuclear non-proliferation regime. So everybody has an interest in success. The remaining issues on the table can indeed be resolved, as they are more or less technical in nature.

**Christopher Bidwell, Senior Fellow, Nonproliferation Law and Policy at the Federation of American Scientists:**

I think a two-month extension is the most likely outcome. The politics on the US side are now murkier than they were a month ago as there is even more skepticism regarding an agreement within the newly elected Congress. The Iranians know this and it makes them nervous. Secondly, there will be more pressure on Iran going forward because of the effect of collapsing energy prices. Iran needs more robust energy revenue streams so the [Obama]administration would likely get more concessions on the nuclear questions - better transparency, lower numbers of active centrifuges and enrichment percentages - by waiting.

**Tarif Rauf, Director of Arms Control and Non-proliferation at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute:**

Given the key issues remaining to be resolved, such as the extent of Iran's uranium enrichment program and related nuclear activities, and sanctions relief by the EU and the US, it is unlikely that a final or comprehensive agreement can be reached by 24 November. There is no magic to the 24 November date, the negotiations should carry on for however long it takes. It is clear that there be only a negotiated solution to the Iran nuclear file.

**Elizabeth Rosenberg, Director of the Energy, Environment, and Security Program at the Center for a New American Security and former special advisor on sanctions at the US Treasury Department:**

The negotiations scheduled to end on November 24 likely will result in either a basic agreement of principles by the parties or an extension of talks. While both of those may bode well for the progress and prospects of nuclear diplomacy, they will be met by a hostile constituency in the US Congress which will bring forward new sanctions legislation that President Obama will be forced to veto. Such a response will be matched by actions from Iranian hardliners, and there is a very real possibility that parliamentary actions in both the US and Iran will be responsible for a breakdown in talks.

**Seyed Hossein Mousavian, former Iranian nuclear negotiator and former ambassador to Germany, now a Research Scholar at Princeton University:**

They may agree on the outlines of a comprehensive agreement and extend for some months to negotiate the details.

*What are the implications of this outcome for the US, Iran and the West?*

Laura Rockwood: The most immediate implication for all parties of an extension is that the constraints on Iran's nuclear program agreed to in the JPOA will continue to prevail and the IAEA will continue to be able to monitor compliance with those constraints, in particular through managed access to centrifuge assembly workshops, centrifuge rotor production workshops and storage facilities. This should be seen as positive for the US, Iran and the West.

An extension of the talks might also facilitate progress on the two outstanding practical measures agreed in May 2014 in the third step of the Iran/IAEA Framework for Cooperation (an agreement to provide more information on experiments with high explosives and neutron transport calculations - the ed).



Iran is under heavy sanctions for its nuclear activities

Ali Vaez: A nuclear agreement could potentially serve as a gateway allowing Iran to renew cooperation with the West, on issues of common interest, such as stability in Afghanistan and Iraq, extremism in Syria, and European energy security. But this is not guaranteed. The [history of Iran's relations with the West, and with the US in particular](#), is replete with misunderstandings and missed opportunities.

Oliver Thränert: A lifting of sanctions would help Iran to recover its economy. Because for Iran it would be possible to declare the outcome of the negotiations as a victory (it will continue to be a "virtual nuclear power"). Tehran would gain leverage in the region. The US for its part would on the one hand gain more flexibility to handle conflicts in the Middle East, but on the other its traditional partners such as Israel and Saudi Arabia will be annoyed. In the longer run, a nuclear arms race including not only Saudi Arabia but also possibly Turkey and Egypt cannot be ruled out.

Christopher Bidwell: In the end the key issue for Iran is getting relief from current economic exclusion sanctions, or at least seeing no new ones enacted. Unfortunately this is not a concession that President Obama can easily give. Even if he uses his authority to grant temporary waivers, the laws remain on the books and new ones may be enacted by Congress which could place significant restrictions on presidential waiver authority. This creates significant risks for European insurance, banking and transportation companies thinking about going back into the Iranian markets. These companies are the front line de facto enforcers of sanctions and they will be watching Congress, not the president, for signals that it is "all clear" to go back into Iran. So even in the end, any agreement that is reached has the potential to collapse as Iran may not get the economic relief it bargains for.

Tarif Rauf: The negotiations have resulted in Iran scaling back its nuclear program in terms of down-blending its entire stock of 20-percent low-enriched uranium, implementing a moratorium on

deploying new generation centrifuges and allowing for enhanced IAEA inspections; and in turn the EU and the US have scaled back some sanctions. The EU and the US need Iranian assistance in dealing with the challenges in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, and to defeat the "IS" threat. Likewise, for Iran, a negotiated solution is the only way to get sanctions relief.

**Elizabeth Rosenberg:** A successful nuclear deal will bring greater security to the international community deeply concerned about Iran's enrichment activities. It will also bring investment opportunities for Iran and foreign companies eager to gain access to potential energy sector growth and expanded commercial trade. As one of the most attractive developing economies in the Middle East, with a relatively well-educated and youthful population, there is tremendous economic potential for any party involved in greater investment in Iran.

**Seyed Hossein Mousavian:** It would be a major step toward a final deal. Resolving the disputes on the nuclear front would open the door for Western-Iranian cooperation on major crises in the Middle East such as Iraq, Afghanistan and "IS."

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Russia has signed a deal with Iran to build two new nuclear reactors at the Bushehr site, already home to a 1,000-megawatt reactor. This comes as Iran seeks an accord with world powers on its contentious nuclear program. (11.11.2014)

##### Opinion: The ball is in Tehran's court for better ties to US

People find fault with US President Obama for many reasons, but they can't blame him for not doing enough to improve the relationship with Iran. Currently, the ball is in Tehran's court, says DW's Michael Knigge. (07.11.2014)

**Date** 19.11.2014

**Author** Michael Knigge

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