

CARNEGIE COUNCIL *for Ethics in International Affairs*

P5 + 1 + Iran: Report on the Ongoing Nuclear Talks

Public Affairs

Seyed Hossein Mousavian, David C. Speedie

Transcript Introduction

DAVID SPEEDIE: I'm David Speedie, director of the program on U.S. Global Engagement here at Carnegie Council.

At the Council, we like to talk about timely events. I don't think it's hyperbolic to use that term today. In fact, [Robert Belfer](#) shared with me the thought—which is absolutely true—that, as you know, the [Lausanne negotiations](#) are supposed to be concluding on the 31st, but when we told Secretary [Kerry](#) that we were having this meeting this evening, he agreed to postpone for two days.

Having said this, in all seriousness, I don't think we could have a better person to lead us through the intricacies and complexities, both in terms of the big political issues and dimensions, but also the technical details that have been bones of contention up to this point, than our guest this evening.

Seyed Hossein Mousavian is an associate research scholar at the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He is—and here I take a deep breath—a former diplomat who served as Iran's ambassador to Germany, head of the Foreign Relations Committee, Iran's National Security Council. Very relevantly and importantly, he was spokesman for Iran in its nuclear negotiations with the international community more than a decade ago, 2003 to 2005. He was foreign policy advisor to the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, vice president of the Center for Strategic Research for International Affairs, general director of the Foreign Ministry for West Europe, chief of the Parliament administration, and, just to get another career switch, editor-in-chief of the English-language international newspaper *Tehran Times*.

He is the author of many [publications](#), including his latest, [Iran and the United States: An Insider's View on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace](#), published in May of 2014. It's a magisterial study of mutual misperceptions and missteps throughout this long saga over the past 30-odd years.

Ambassador Mousavian, welcome back to the Carnegie Council.

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Thank you very much, David.

Discussion

DAVID SPEEDIE: Let's get right to, obviously, the big [news](#) of the day. We have been going through a deluge of reports, a confusion of analyses on what was going on. As recently as yesterday, one newspaper reported that things were limping along, things were extended, and so on and so forth. You spoke yourself recently on CNN of excellent progress being made. Is that an evaluation you would stick to today?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Of course, David.

First of all, let me thank you and everybody here to make this event possible.

I believe, if there was not substantive progress, they would not have made such a statement today.

Ultimately, they were able to agree on the principles of a comprehensive deal. For the next three months they are going to discuss the details. But on every issue about verification measures, transparency measures, measures related to break-out, non-diversion toward weaponization, about nuclear facilities at Arak, Fordow, Natanz, they have agreed on the principles. Therefore, definitely this was a big success for both parties.

It's been about a year that everybody is discussing whether we should go for the deal, a good deal or a bad deal. This is the main issue. I'm afraid every party would discuss now, would talk with its domestic public opinion and would declare victory for its own side. It's normal, but let's be realistic. The deal is good, I believe, for the P5 + 1, the five world powers, including the United States, because of two major achievements.

One, the maximum level of transparency in the Iranian nuclear program, based on international rules and regulations. Iran has accepted the maximum level of transparency for verification and inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA]. Therefore, Iran would have completely open nuclear activities. This is number one.

Number two, every possible diversion toward weaponization—they have agreed the path, the way, toward weaponization now is closed.

Let me explain a little bit more what I mean. We have two ways of making nuclear bombs. One way is through heavy-water facilities, plutonium. One way is from enrichment of uranium. Iran has both technologies. On heavy-water facilities, Iran has accepted to have no reprocessing. As long as you have no reprocessing, it would be impossible to make a nuclear bomb. Heavy-water facilities without reprocessing means no nuclear bomb.

More, the current capacity of Iranian heavy-water facility at Arak produces 10 kilograms of plutonium a year. If you have reprocessing and if you can produce 10 kilograms of plutonium per year, 10 kilograms of plutonium would be enough for one nuclear bomb. But you should have reprocessing.

Iran has accepted to make technical changes to the current capacity of its heavy water to reduce the production of plutonium from 10 kilograms per year to about 1 kilogram. Therefore, first, Iran would have very minimum production of plutonium. Even if Iran would have reprocessing, Iran would need 10 years to produce 10 kilograms. This is enough [of a time] period to prevent Iran if they decide to do so.

With these two measures, definitely any risk of proliferation from heavy-water facilities is gone.

Now we come to Natanz and Fordow, two enrichment sites. The second path for a nuclear bomb is using enrichment facilities, but you have to increase the level of enrichment above 90 percent. Then you would have to have warheads, nuclear warheads. Iran does not have nuclear warheads.

First, Iran accepted, for about 15 years, to cap the level of its enrichment below 5 percent. As long as you have low-enriched uranium, a level below 5 percent, it's impossible to make a nuclear bomb. Second, Iran accepted to limit its stockpile of uranium—they have now about 8,000 kilograms of enriched uranium—less than 5 percent. They would either dilute or convert to fuel pellets, and they would reduce their stockpile of enriched uranium to 300 kilograms—therefore, the minimum of stockpile, enriching below 5 percent.

There are two enrichment sites, one at Natanz, one at Fordow. Iran has accepted for a number of years to use Fordow for R&D [research and development], not for enrichment facilities.

These two paths toward making nuclear bombs with such agreements mean enough assurances that Iran would never go toward weaponization.

I think this is good for the United States, for the P5 + 1, because, as I said, of the maximum level of transparency and every measure about non-diversion towards weaponization.

At the same time, this is a good deal for Iran, because the main struggle for Iranians since 2003 has

been for the world powers to respect the rights of Iran to have enrichment within its country, under the framework of [NTP](#), Non-Proliferation Treaty, for peaceful purposes. Now the world powers have accepted Iran to have enrichment. The second good issue for Iran is that ultimately and gradually the sanctions would be removed, lifted.

Therefore, two big achievements for the world powers, two big achievements for Iran. I would call it a real good deal for both parties.

DAVID SPEEDIE: The language that has been used for the agreement reached today is basically "a broad framework of understanding." President [Obama](#) spoke later today of "a comprehensive accord" by June 30. What are the steps now between the broad framework and the comprehensive, detailed final product, we hope, on June 30?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: The statement issued today is about the principles. For example, they just have stated Iran would agree to address all IAEA issues related to possible military dimensions. They say "PMDs." This is a principle. They would need to see it, to discuss with the IAEA what are the issues, which accesses, inspections, for which period you need. These are some technical issues which they would discuss.

For example, about technical conversions at Arak, in principle they have agreed that Iran would reduce the amount of production of plutonium from 10 kilograms to 1 kilogram. But this technical conversion is something that the scientists from the world powers and Iran would need to sit together to define exactly. Ultimately, Iran is going to have sophisticated heavy-water facilities with every assurance about no bomb. That's why the world powers would also help Iran on scientific work in order to have a higher level of heavy-water facility and then make all technical changes to remove the danger of diversion toward weaponization.

DAVID SPEEDIE: When I heard you speak at Princeton just a few weeks ago, you offered the caveat that Iranians sometimes feel there are two Americas, two United States. In this case, of course, the other one resides in the U.S. Congress. Most recently, there was a fairly controversial [missive](#) sent to Iran by members of the U.S. Senate.

On the other hand, I suppose one could say there are also at least two Irans. There are people in Iran who are not as well disposed as you and the negotiators in Lausanne to this final agreement.

What do you see as the prospective pitfalls, given this perception of the different levels of willingness to be accommodating?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: The domestic situation in Tehran and Washington is very similar. They have two powerful factions. One is pro-deal and one is against it. But there are major differences between oppositions in Tehran and oppositions in Washington.

Oppositions in Tehran like a nuclear deal, but they say Iranian nuclear negotiators should not accept anything beyond the Non-Proliferation Treaty. They insist a deal should be within NPT, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, no commitment beyond international rules. Though Iran has accepted many commitments for 10, 15, 20 years beyond NPT—as I explained just some minutes ago, there are measures beyond NPT, because within NPT you can enrich to 100 percent. Within the Non-Proliferation Treaty there are no limits for a stockpile. Within the Non-Proliferation Treaty you can have 100 enrichment sites. There is no limit. You should not only divert toward weaponization.

The limits Iran has accepted for 10, 15 years are beyond the Non-Proliferation Treaty. That's why there is strong opposition in Tehran about the deal. But the argument is this: Within the framework of NPT or beyond?

The oppositions in Washington—although they know Iran has accepted many, many measures beyond the current international nuclear treaty, NPT, still they don't like the deal. For them, really, NPT doesn't matter. They don't care about NPT. Perhaps [Netanyahu](#) has much more weight for them compared to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, NPT.

This is a big difference.

The second difference between Tehran and Washington is that there is no foreign intervention on the nuclear policy of Iran, but in Washington, Israel interferes, Saudi Arabia interferes. Many countries interfere. There is really foreign interference on decision-making of the United States on the nuclear deal, and everybody knows what we are talking about.

Definitely we have many similarities, strong oppositions in both capitals. But to my understanding, Iranian oppositions are more realistic than American.

One more. In Iran, although there are two powerful factions, at the end there is an ultimate decision-maker, which is the [supreme leader](#). He decides the deal is not finished. But we don't have something like this in Washington. If Obama decides, he would be challenged by Congress, would be threatened by Congress. Iran and the other world powers really don't know whether the United States of America would be able to be committed to this deal or the next president would change the policy or the Congress would disturb or they would go for more [sanctions](#). This is a real suspicion, not on the Iranian side. Everybody now is concerned whether the United States would be able to be committed to the deal or not.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Please clarify something for me and for the audience. Some years ago at Harvard, I got into a heated conversation with some colleagues about the question of the existence of a [fatwa](#) against nuclear weapons development by, I think, Ayatollah [Khomeini](#), the supreme leader at the time of the [revolution](#). My colleagues were skeptical about this, what this really meant, what it implied. Is there such a thing? You mentioned the supreme leader, as the supreme leader. Does this exist?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Definitely the *fatwa* exists, there is no doubt. Ayatollah Khamenei himself many times has reiterated this personally, publicly. The Iranian mission in New York, at the United Nations, has officially presented the *fatwa*, and it is registered in the United Nations. They have given an official note attaching the *fatwa*, and it is registered. There is no doubt there is such a *fatwa*.

The suspicion is whether Iran really means this *fatwa* or not. This is the question.

I always have said that we have an excellent example of evidence in the 1980s when [Saddam Hussein](#) [used](#) chemical weapons—unfortunately, material technology was provided by the United States and Europe for Saddam to use weapons of mass destruction—and about 100,000 Iranians were either killed or injured during the [war](#). The Iranian military went to the late-Iran supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, and they wanted to get permission to reciprocate with chemical weapons. He said, "No. Religiously, this is wrong. We cannot reciprocate with weapons of mass destruction."

I say when a nation during war is attacked by weapons of mass destruction—not just a few thousand, 100,000 people are killed or injured—and is not reciprocating with weapons of mass destruction because of its religious values, what better objective guarantees are you looking at?

DAVID SPEEDIE: Finally, looking beyond today and the prospects even for June, I would like to look at the implications of today's agreements beyond just the nuclear weapons—or the nuclear program issue, I should say. The focus on Lausanne has, quite rightly, demanded much of our attention. It has also, then, diminished somewhat our attention to a turbulent extended region, from [Libya](#) to [Yemen](#), let's say. You have [written](#) recently about "the potential for an open gateway for the formation of a security cooperative framework between Iran and the world powers, specifically the United States, to tackle regional crises." Particularly, of course, you mention [ISIL](#) [or [ISIS](#)], the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

But while we are largely on the same page with [ISIL](#), what about Yemen, where there is now a Saudi-led, I think, 10-country [incursion](#) against the [Houthi opposition](#) in Yemen? Beyond that, one even reads, perhaps in exaggerated terms, about some sort of existential struggle in the region between the joint Arab army and the Iranian [Revolutionary Guard](#). Where does this come out, do you see, in terms of implications?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: We can discuss a number of implications. Let's talk first about implications on proliferation. Many people, David, were asking why this negotiation is taking so long, why the U.S. secretary of state should sit with the Iranian [foreign minister](#) from 9:00 in the evening until 6:00 in the morning to discuss for hundreds of hours perhaps.

The reason was that the world powers practically—the terms and conditions they were negotiating with Iran are new sets of measures far beyond the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This is the most powerful, intrusive mechanism for inspections, verification of nuclear program ever, during the history of non-proliferation. For the first time, the world powers have been able to define many, many measures which would prevent any path toward weaponization. Countries like North Korea—they were a member of NPT. They withdrew and they built the bomb. Therefore, everybody understood after 40 years that NPT is not enough, because you can enrich up to 100 percent, and in a day you can withdraw and build a bomb.

But the sets of measures they have agreed on, about no break-out or non-diversion toward weaponization or verification, are new sets of measures which we would never have during the last 40, 50 years. To my understanding, this is a big achievement for the proliferation issue if the world powers would take it to start a very serious—to globalize these measures, not to limit to one country.

It was one of the reasons the negotiation was so complicated. At the end, the implication now can be huge for proliferation. One.

Second, Iran initiated in 1970 a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East. For over 40 years, we have not been able to realize this initiative because there is one country, Israel, that has the nuclear bomb, hundreds of nuclear bombs. They are not going to dismantle. They are not going to accept NPT. They are not going to give permission to the IAEA for inspection.

If the major measures agreed with Iran would be implemented for the whole Middle East, this would be perhaps the best guarantee about a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East. When you say enrichment below 5 percent, for 10, 15 years, Iran would do it. But you can use this moment to convince the other countries in the Middle East to accept such new measures and regulations—no reprocessing in the whole Middle East, having no excessive stockpile beyond your domestic needs, stockpile of enriched uranium. There are a lot of good, important new measures on verification, on break-out, on non-diversion toward weaponization. If they can regionalize these measures, this could be really a big achievement for the Middle East peace, stability, and for the world.

About Iran and the United States, I have explained, David, in my book, *Iran and the U.S.*, every detail about many, many, many efforts, attempts Iran and the United States have made during the last 35 years for rapprochement. But all have failed.

This is the first time, at the highest level, a serious, genuine negotiation took place and was successful. Everyone knows the Lausanne agreement—we owe more to the efforts of Iran and the United States, because they negotiated more than everybody. Therefore, this is the first time bilateral, direct talks took place and were successful.

I think this could be the first step toward further cooperation between Iran and the United States on many, many other disputed issues. We have a long list of disputed issues between Iran and the United States. If it was supposed to fail, definitely direct talks between Iran and the United States would have failed, and nobody would be able to talk about further cooperation.

The third implication is about possibilities of cooperation between Iran and the United States on commonalities. When we look at the region, everybody now has recognized that threat number one to the Middle East, to the region, to the international community, and to the world is ISIS—not only ISIS, the extremism, terrorism coming out of the radical Salafist, Wahhabist ideology of Sunnis, because we have different versions of ISIS. We have [al-Qaeda](#). We have [Jabhat al-Nusra](#). We have [Boko Haram](#). We have many, many different versions, but they are all coming from one school of thought. The roots are the same.

Iran and the United States are in the same boat. This is a major threat to Iran; this is a major threat to the United States, to Europe, to world powers, to the region, and even the U.S. allies in the region. Iran and the United States have been cooperating in **fighting** ISIS during last year indirectly. The United States has been leading the airstrikes against ISIS and the Iranians have been leading the ground forces against ISIS. But there has not been direct negotiation, cooperation, how to fight ISIS or contain ISIS regionally.

When we go to **Iraq**, Iran and the United States have the same interests. Stability, peace in Iraq is in the interests of Iran and the United States both. That's why they have been supporting the same government Baghdad for over 10 years.

The same is true in **Afghanistan**. After the collapse of the **Taliban**, Iranians, Americans have the same interests in Afghanistan.

From day one, I was against limiting the direct talks to the nuclear issue. I believe Iran and the United States should have a broad dialogue on every issue, whether disputed issues or commonalities. But Tehran and Washington, whether we like it or not, decided first to try nuclear. Okay, now there is a success. This can be a beginning of a broader dialogue, a regional dialogue between Iran and the United States, Iran and Europe, Iran and world powers, to manage the real crises in the Middle East—Afghanistan, **Syria**, Yemen, **Lebanon**. Unfortunately, we have a lot of crises which look unmanageable, except if there is regional cooperation and international cooperation. I believe this could open the door for such a cooperation between Iran and the United States.

Questions

QUESTION: Susan Gitelson.

It is a pleasure to hear someone so reasonable, so calm in dealing with the situation. Unfortunately, we read that there is a larger conflict in the Middle East between the Shiites and Sunnis. Saudi Arabia says that if Iran gets a nuclear weapon, then the Saudis want a nuclear weapon. There are so many divisions going on, and resentment, perhaps, that Iran has been advancing so well and reestablishing the Persian Empire.

How would you deal with all these conflicts—the Shiites, Sunni, and so forth?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: I agree with you, there is Shia-Sunni conflict, but, if not more, at least at the same level, Sunni-Sunni conflict. ISIS has killed more Sunni than Shia. The real fight now is within Sunnism, ISIS. They have declared Saudi Arabia Mecca and Medina. They want to capture Mecca and Medina. They don't want to capture Tehran. The Arab countries—Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq—practically Arab countries, are more threatened by this Jabhat al-Nusra or al-Qaeda or Taliban or ISIS. They are all Sunni, and they are in Arab lands.

I believe the issue is the lack of a regional cooperation system in the region. If we can have a regional cooperation system between Iran, Saudi Arabia, GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council], and Iraq, all countries around the Persian Gulf, like the type of cooperation Europeans have been able to develop after 40 years—they began from small cooperation; now they have broadened year after year—then there would be no fear. The fear existed 40 years ago in Europe about the role of Germany. They have been able to resolve such fears through a regional cooperation system. This is one issue.

The other issue is a big misunderstanding by Saudi Arabia, by the United States, by Europeans, by Arab countries about Iranians and Iran and the Iranian culture. They have invited the United States. They have orchestrated the international community in the region for the most coercive strategies ever against Iran in the last 35 years. Saudi Arabia was the key supporter of Saddam Hussein invading Iran. The West—the United States, Europe—supported Saddam to use weapons of mass destruction. Just today, Obama said they are the most comprehensive sanctions ever against Iran. Their understanding was more pressure, more sanctions, more coercion would isolate Iran more or perhaps would bring regime change.

I tried to explain in my book such a misunderstanding. Iranian culture is this: more pressure, more aggressive. As long as you apply pressure and threats, they become more aggressive and more resistant. The role today Iran has in the region is because of the threats, sanctions, pressures, trying to dismantle Iran. The war was exactly to dismantle Iran. Saddam claimed Khuzestan as part of Iraq.

If they correct such a narrative, you can have a different Iran. If they continue the pressures, sanctions, threats, Iran will become more powerful and more powerful, as we have seen during 35 years.

QUESTION: Allen Young.

Mr. Ambassador, you talked about the hope that there will be dialogue between the United States and Iran to hopefully work out some of the issues that separate the two countries. The United States has made it clear that the security of Israel is of vital interest to the United States. Your supreme leader has called for the elimination of Israel. Is it possible, through dialogue or otherwise, to work out the two positions? If so, how do you think those positions could be worked out?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: The Iranian supreme leader's public official statement was that Iran proposed a free election between Jews, Christians, Muslims, and let them decide about their future. Whatever is the result of the election, Iran would respect it. He made such a statement publicly in front of 120 leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran. It was a big international event, and he personally made this statement.

However, I remember when I was ambassador in Germany during the 1990s. The Europeans were telling me, "Look, Iran is the main obstacle to the [peace process](#). If you agree to a state solution, everything will be resolved."

Now, after 20 years, 30 years, the United States did everything to convince Netanyahu on a two-state solution. The United States failed. Everybody understands that the problem Israel has today is because of the Israeli policies. If Israel is isolated more than ever, this is because of its own policies. It is Israel who has declined a two-state solution. Iran has nothing to do with this issue. If the United States could convince Israel and they would have accepted, then the Israeli situation could be different.

Nevertheless, Israelis always have tried to use the Iran issue and some rhetoric coming out of Iran for other purposes. Remember for eight years the big issue everywhere was [Ahmadinejad's](#) denial of the [Holocaust](#)? We had in 2013 a new [president](#), a new foreign minister. The new foreign minister publicly condemned the Holocaust. The new administration after the election condemned the Holocaust. They recognized this has been a disastrous historical event. They even congratulated the Jews on the occasion of their New Year.

But, you see, Netanyahu's policy against Ahmadinejad and Rouhani is the same. It has not been changed. They like more harsh rhetoric from Tehran for other purposes.

Why were they pushing too much on the Iranian nuclear issue? Iran is a member of the NPT; Israel is not. Iran does not have a nuclear bomb. Israel has about 400 nuclear bombs. Iran has given just in 10 years 7,000 man-hour inspections. No other country during the history of IAEA has given such a level of inspections. Israel has not given even one inspection.

You see how they have been successful to bring the world to talk about an Iranian nuclear bomb? Nobody is talking about an Israeli nuclear bomb. I think the world really has been deceived by Israel.

QUESTION: I'm Kevin Dong. I'm a student from NYU.

Earlier you were talking about the indirect cooperation between the United States and Iran regarding the Islamic State. Wouldn't it stand to reason that a direct and open form of cooperation would present a more effective united military front against *Daesh* [aka ISIS]? How likely do you think direct and open cooperation in terms of military efforts would happen?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: I don't know whether this would happen or not, but I know, before a

success on the nuclear talks, it was the position of the United States of America that they are not going to have any other dialogue or cooperation unless the nuclear issue is resolved. Now the nuclear issue is going to be resolved. There is a very, very clear picture. Therefore, I say the door now is open.

But whether, if Iran and the United States cooperate, they would be able to destroy ISIS, I don't believe so. Although the United States is the international power, although Iran is the regional power, although bilateral cooperation would have huge implications and good consequences against ISIS, we need regional cooperation between regional powers—Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and Iraq, five regional powers, in coordination, cooperation with five international powers, the members of the United Nations Security Council. If we can have P5 and five regional powers sit together to cooperate—because we would need broader measures and decisions, strategies, cooperation all over the Middle East, Africa, and beyond on ISIS. This is not going just to be resolved with negotiation between Iran and the United States.

QUESTION: I'm Krishen Mehta with the Aspen Institute.

You mentioned the subject of sanctions, which have been affecting Iranian society for a long time. Assuming that this deal goes forward in a very successful way, as we all hope, what do you see are the consequences both outside Iran and within Iran—for example, outside, if the other countries in Europe agree to the lifting of sanctions, but there is not a resistance from the United States due to how polarized it is? If Congress continues to step in the way of sanctions, that would affect Iran's perspective and will have an impact on sanctions. Internally, if the sanctions are actually lifted, how will that change the political dynamics within Iran in terms of the future and the current control that the parties in Iran have on the political process? What are the long-term implications of this lifting of sanctions in Iran's society and Iran's politics?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: First of all, there is, again, here in Washington, specifically with the U.S. Congress, about the impact of sanctions—the Congress is calling every day, every night for more sanctions. They believe if they have more sanctions, they would be able to limit more the Iranian nuclear program. From 2010, when I came to Princeton University, I was telling everybody that it doesn't matter what level of sanctions you are going to impose, more sanctions would lead to more enrichment in Iran. Iranians would increase their nuclear program only through more sanctions. If you want Iran to expand its nuclear program, go ahead for more sanctions.

Many people, David, believe I'm bluffing. But today Obama said, "We had more sanctions. Iran expanded its enrichment." Therefore, practically, indirectly, he was accepting that the United States and international powers failed through the sanction policy to capitulate Iranians and to limit the Iranian nuclear program.

For the future, domestically, I believe Iran would go more and more for economic development inside Iran.

Second, I believe the Iranian private sector would get a much bigger role on the Iranian economy. As long as you have more sanctions, the private sector is either weaker or dead, and the more state institutions have been able to get the bigger share of the Iranian economy. This could be changed with privatization of the Iranian economy, to have a more open-market economy in Iran. The implication would be huge.

Third, when there is less threat, the political atmosphere of Iran would become less security-dominated. As long as you have more pressures and threats, the domestic political situation is completely dominated by security. This would really change, I think.

On relations with Europe or the United States, if you look at Iranian trade and economy, before sanctions, the West had over 50, perhaps 60 percent of Iranian trade and economy—the share of the West in general, about 60 percent. After sanctions, now the share of the West is about 15 percent. China has 55 percent. Through sanctions, practically, the West pushed Iran toward the East. Now it may change.

QUESTION: I was wondering if you could touch a little bit on the perspective of the nuclear negotiations and the potential soft cooperation with the United States—the perspective from the next generation of Iranians, like people my age.

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Iranians, I believe, have had during the last 60, 70 years—more Iranian youth have come to the United States for education. I'm one of them, before the revolution. The Iranian foreign minister is one of them. The Iranian **head** of the Atomic Energy Organization is one of them. Even after the revolution, they preferred to come to U.S. universities, but they had a lot of limitations, problems. Even the families could not transfer the tuition for the students because of the sanctions.

I think if this course changes, we may have much broader people-to-people relations between the Iranian nation and American nation—academic relations, tourism, cultural relations, social activities. A lot of different dimensions, nation-to-nation, people-to-people relations, I think, would be the first outcome of a possible change after the final deal.

I don't know whether you asked again about the impact on proliferation or not.

QUESTIONER: I was just asking about the perspective, just basically what they would think about this.

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Iranians from day one said, "We don't want the nuclear bomb. We are ready to give every assurance. We have no problem with transparency." At the time I was a member of the nuclear team, in 2003 to 2005. The principles agreed today in Lausanne are exactly the same principles we proposed in 2005 to European countries. At that time the U.S. position was no enrichment. That's why we failed. After 10 years and a lot of sanctions, problems, I think the world powers accepted the same principles they proposed before sanctions, during the time of President **Khatami** in 2005.

But I think the Iranian nuclear program would become very much normal. Then the world powers, Europe and the United States, little by little would open the doors for peaceful nuclear technology between Iran and the international community. Definitely this would be completely a civil program, with more bilateral cooperation between Europeans and Iranians, with Russians. After 10, 15 years of all these verification measures and limits, I'm sure the United States and the world would come to the conclusion that the Iranians are not after a nuclear bomb; they just want a very, very normal civil nuclear program.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for a very thoughtful discourse.

I'm curious as to what you said earlier about the election in Israel. You said that the supreme leader, who is unelected, would agree to rapprochement with Israel if there was a legitimate two-state solution. I think, to some, that strains one's credibility. Perhaps you could build on that.

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: First of all, you cannot say, really, the Iranian leader is not elected. It is another mistake many Americans have made, saying the Iranian supreme leader is unelected. Iranians elect an assembly of experts, 80 people. This assembly elects the leader. In Europe the people elect parliament. They vote directly for parliament. The party who has the majority in parliament nominates the chancellor or the prime minister. Can you say the German **chancellor** is unelected? It's exactly the same Iranian mechanism. They elect an assembly of experts, 80 people directly elected by people to decide about the leader.

Second, why everybody is talking about the Iranian position? Iran does not recognize Israel, it is true. Fifty other Muslim countries do not recognize Israel. The U.S. allies in the region do not recognize Israel. Saudi Arabia, with such excellent relations they have ever had for 40 years—every sophisticated weapon, political support—do they have democracy? Do they recognize Israel? The U.S. allies in the region also do not recognize Israel. If we have 57 Muslim countries, 50 of them do not recognize Israel. But everybody is talking about Iran. Nobody is talking about the U.S. allies, even. The United States has no problems with its own allies when they do not recognize Israel.

Believe it or not, there has been too much exaggeration about the Iranian position on Israel. However, I

cannot deny the hostilities between Iran and Israel. No doubt, the Israelis have threatened Iran for 35 years. You have heard a thousand times the Israeli prime minister has invited the United States to attack Iran. If you hear from Tehran to erase Israel or wipe Israel off the map—this is exactly like the slogans, rhetoric of the Israeli prime minister you hear every day in the United States, inviting the United States to attack Iran with a military strike.

To my understanding, if there is rapprochement between Iran and the United States, Iranian hostilities between Iran and Israel would decrease. Iranians do not consider Israel as a major threat. They don't care about Israel. For Iranians, the real national security threat is the United States of America, because the U.S. military is everywhere around Iranian borders, from the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Turkey, NATO—everywhere. Then the United States is saying all options on the table—sanctions, pressures, regime change. This is the real national security threat. Why would such a U.S. policy push Iran toward more hostility against Israel? Because from the Iranian perspective, this is the Jewish lobby, [AIPAC](#) [American Israel Public Affairs Committee], pushing the United States for pressure against Iran, sanctions against Iran, and they want revenge in the region.

The Israelis pay a cost in the region for their policies in Washington.

QUESTION: My name is Bruce Lipman. I'm from Hunter College, and I'm sitting in for Pamela Falk from CBS. Unfortunately, she couldn't make it today.

This question is, what would be the most likely reason the deal would fail? Would it be because Iranians don't think sanctions are lifted fast enough or don't want to allow verification? Would it be because of U.S. domestic opposition? What other reason?

QUESTION: Most people consider the United States and Israel as open democracies. When you say that you have a supreme leader who can make the final decision, we as Americans do not consider that an open election. We have seen in the last [election](#) that, with the Iranian Guard and other situations, many people were murdered, put in jail, or liquidated, or have not been heard from.

Israel is requesting for the first basis of negotiation the idea of accepting the state of Israel to exist. Your patron and [Hammas](#), [Hezbollah](#) in Iran, have killed Americans and others with your IEDs [improvised explosive devices] in Afghanistan, Iraq. Those equipments and death to America have come from Iran.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Sir, can you move to a question, please? Thank you.

QUESTIONER: How can you not base the situation of an open acceptance of the state of Israel?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: First, tell me, what has the nuclear issue to do with the recognition of Israel?

QUESTIONER: That is why the state of Israel has atomic weapons to protect itself.

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: First of all, if you say nuclear weapons are good to protect, then you should support everyone to have nuclear weapons to support their security and existence. Every country in the region is facing real threats.

QUESTIONER: Under Ahmadinejad—

QUESTIONER: —and the ayatollah, you are threatening to liquidate Israel continuously.

DAVID SPEEDIE: You have made your point very well, sir. Thank you.

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Second, Iranians, if they say, "Death to America" or "Great Satan," you are right. But every U.S. administration from the beginning of the revolution has labeled Iran the same—a state of terrorism, rogue state, pariah state, regime change. They have the same policy. It is not only Iran. This is exactly the same rhetoric, the same labels from the United States for 35 years.

I do not deny the mistrust and hostility between Iran and the United States. The hostility is mutual. The

mistrust is mutual. You say Iranians have killed Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan. First of all, this is not clear, but it is clear that 1 million Iranians were either killed or injured during the war. Saddam invaded, with U.S. support. It is clear. Iranians can say, "Hey, Americans, you have killed 1 million Iranians." It is clear that 100,000 Iranians were killed by weapons of mass destruction, and the United States publicly—you have all documents in the U.S. Congress—provided material, technology for Saddam to use weapons of mass destruction.

Iranians—of course, they would reciprocate in different means. You cannot expect that the United States goes for sanctions, pressures, regime change, attack Iran, and Iranians see it and say, "Thank you, United States." Of course they would reciprocate. And you should not complain for the reciprocations.

We are talking about how to bring peace between Iran and the United States. On the nuclear issue, the criterion for the world and for the international community is the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is not Bibi Netanyahu.

If we are going to have trust between Iran and the United States, what can be the criterion on every issue? International rules. On the nuclear issue, this is NPT. If there is a deal based on NPT, this is the best way for confidence-building and for peace and to resolve disputes on the nuclear issue. Then we should go to weapons of mass destruction. There is only one way: elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. This is an international decision. These are United Nations Security Council resolutions for 40 years. A nuclear weapon-free zone, weapons of mass destruction-free Middle East is decided by the United Nations unanimously. There is only one country denying, and you are supporting exactly that country.

Human rights: I do not claim that Iran has the best human rights. But of all the U.S. allies in the region, which country has a better human rights situation? Definitely Iran has more democracy compared to your allies in the region, like Saudi Arabia. The United States supported [Mubarak's](#) corrupted regime for 40 years because of democracy? Come on.

DAVID SPEEDIE: Can you answer briefly the other question, Ambassador? It's a good question. We've tried to discuss the positive aspects of the negotiations in Lausanne. But the question was a very good one: What might make them fail?

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: I remember your question. I don't believe there would be failure on the nuclear talks. From the very beginning, we had three strategies in the United States. One was military strike to attack Iranian nuclear facilities. When Iran built nuclear facilities under the mountain, immune from any type of military attack, the United States understood, first, they would not be able to destroy the knowledge. Iranians have the knowledge. You cannot destroy the knowledge. You can destroy facilities.

Secondly, with under-the-mountain facilities, they would be able to make bombs if they are attacked. They would kick the IAEA out of Iran. They would withdraw from NPT.

Therefore, the United States, the world community, the world powers understood this is not a good strategy.

But they tried a sanction narrative for eight, nine years. If you listened to Obama's statement today, first, he said, "We had more sanctions. Iranians had more enrichment, more expansion of their nuclear program." Second, he said, "Iranians reach to a three-month period for break-out." If there was not a nuclear deal, Iran would have passed the break-out period within three months.

Therefore, the notion of sanctions—already experienced for 10 years, and it has failed.

Diplomacy was the third choice. The United States engaged very actively for a year and a half. Now they have the result.

Compare 40 years of U.S. efforts to bring a two-state solution. Israelis denied and they rejected the United States. A one-and-a-half year negotiation with Iranians on the nuclear issue: They got the result.

You should be happy. I really don't understand why you are not happy.

On your question, I think three strategies could be the maximum strategy. The other two already failed. They are not going to experience that again. The diplomacy, to my understanding, ultimately today has reached the no-return point. I am almost confident that they will go to the final deal by July. This, to me, manufactured crisis would be resolved, and it would be time to pay attention to the real crisis in the Middle East.

DAVID SPEEDIE: As some of our robust questioning has proven, there is still much to be done.

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Something should be left for the next time, David.

DAVID SPEEDIE: There will be a next time.

But let me try to end where we began, on a positive note and two important things that you mentioned, Ambassador.

First, the fact that, although this has been P5 + 1, what has really set apart these talks from before is the eyeball-to-eyeball talks between Secretary Kerry and Minister Zarif. This really is a breakthrough in terms of what—

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Yes, that's what I said also.

DAVID SPEEDIE: The second, another very sage Iran observer, [Gary Sick](#), whom you know well, a professor at Columbia, [wrote](#) before today's agreement that Iran is the most inspected country in the world. Gary is no apologist for Iran, as you well know. After today, that is all the more evident. *[For more from Gary Sick on Iran and its nuclear program, check out his September 2013 Carnegie [discussion](#).]*

So the bottom line is, as you also said, the door is open, and let's hope on both the nuclear question and the regional cooperation issues that you have mentioned, we can walk through that door.

This gentleman travels the world, quite literally on these issues. I can't tell you how proud and pleased we are, Ambassador, that the first visit you make is to the Carnegie Council after this, I hope, momentous day. Thank you so much.

SEYED HOSSEIN MOUSAVIAN: Thank you.

Audio

Speaking on the very day of the nuclear accord, Ambassador Mousavian explains why he believes the agreement is positive progress for both sides. And in a candid and forthright discussion with the audience, he explains the Iranian perspective on Israel, the U.S.-Israel relationship, ISIS, and also the workings of the Iranian government.

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