

Nuclear Deal, the Road to Peace between Iran and the West

By Seyed Hossein Mousavian

After eight days of marathon talks in Switzerland, Iran and world powers reached a framework [agreement](#) on Iran's nuclear dossier on April 2, 2015. This initial agreement serves as the basis for continued talks until the June 30 deadline toward a comprehensive deal. Following a short pause in negotiations, all parties will commence drafting the final agreement with its relevant clauses to bring an end to more a decade of contention over Iran's nuclear program.

The [announcement](#) outlined in surprising detail the commitments and concessions by Iran and the world powers (P5+1, which includes US, UK, Russia, France, China and Germany). The agreed framework places unprecedented intrusive inspections and transparency measures to ensure Iran's nuclear program remains peaceful. It also limits Iran's production and stockpile of fissile materials with a majority of its enriched uranium stockpile destined for export. In return, the United Nations Security Council, European Union and United States will terminate all nuclear-related sanctions, simultaneous with the IAEA verifying implementation by Iran of its key nuclear commitments.

If the framework agreement is finalized within a comprehensive deal and fully implemented—it will be a win-win for all parties involved as it meets their key demands. From the beginning, the Iranians insisted on two major outcomes from the negotiations. The first is for the international community to acknowledge and respect the rights of Iran for peaceful nuclear technology, including enrichment, as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); and second to lift comprehensive sanctions. Similarly, the Iranians have shown flexibility and commitment to take concrete steps to address the concerns of the P5+1 over nuclear weapons proliferation. President Obama's statement following the breakthrough talks [acknowledged](#), "This framework would cut off every pathway that Iran could take to develop a nuclear weapon. Iran will face strict limitations on its program, and Iran has also agreed to the most robust and intrusive inspections and transparency regime ever negotiated for any nuclear program in history." Iran has accepted all confidence building measures assuring no diversion toward weaponization and the deal will in fact set a new and higher bar for global non-proliferation policy.

It did not take long for the opponents of any diplomatic progress to come out of the woodwork. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu took to the US airwaves to voice his opposition and [call](#) the framework agreement "a very bad deal" that does not go far enough to dismantle Iran's nuclear infrastructure nor "stop [Iran's] aggression in the region." Here are the facts regarding Bibi's concern for nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East and aggressive policies. Iran does [not](#) have nuclear weapons and is a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that advocates for nuclear disarmament and limiting its spread. Israel on the other hand has over [400](#) nukes and has never joined the NPT. For over a decade, Iran has granted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) more than 7000 mandate inspections of its nuclear facilities—an unprecedented access in the history of the United Nations nuclear agency. The number of inspections Israel has permitted to the IAEA during the past decade is an impressive—zero!

Regarding regional aggression and what Netanyahu [claims](#) as the Iranian "military machine that is busy conquering the Middle East." Iran in last [200](#) years has not invaded any country, while Israel since its formation in 1948 has been [responsible](#) for occupying Palestinian territories and waging multiple wars against its neighbors (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Gaza). Ironically, Netanyahu and his

government's policies have been reckless for the region, reinforced by Bibi's recent rejection for the "two states" solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Another major threat to the deal is the Republican-led U.S. Congress, seeking to press for further sanctions and pressures. The argument in support of such coercive policies—by majority of US congress, several US Arab allies in the region and Israel—is that it would force Iran to capitulate. Taking a closer look at the history of such policy toward Iran indicates the opposite outcome has been achieved. The principles of the framework agreement made in 2015—following 9 years of comprehensive sanctions, sabotage, assassination of nuclear scientists and international isolation of Iran—is exactly the same as the one [proposed](#) to European countries in March 2005 (when I served as then spokesperson for the Iranian nuclear team). Those nuclear talks failed primarily because of the United States insistence that Iran cannot have any enrichment on its soil—a clear violation of Iran's rights.

In 2013, the U.S. accepted Iran to have enrichment based on the NPT albeit with limitations and specifically for Iran's practical domestic needs. This change in US policy was the impetus to break the deadlock in nuclear talks and reach the interim nuclear deal or the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) [signed](#) in November 2013. Washington's change of heart was not to appease Iran, rather a realization that sanctions have accelerated Iran's nuclear program. Prior to the sanctions, Iran possessed few hundred centrifuges, was enriching uranium at below 5% with its stockpile amounting to couple hundred kilograms. After the sanctions, Iran's installed centrifuges numbered 22,000 with an increased uranium enrichment level to 20% and 9000 kilograms of stockpile. The endless calls by Netanyahu and Congress for further sanctions or even war will only be reciprocated with an expansion of Iran's nuclear program and retaliation.

The latest triumph through diplomacy puts into motion measures that go beyond any international nuclear non-proliferation monitoring, verification and inspections regime. The technical man in the US negotiating team, US energy secretary Ernest Moniz [stated](#) that the deal would provide “unprecedented access and transparency” for inspectors, adding that “we'll have continuous surveillance of centrifuge production” and warning that “if they [Iran] fail to meet any of these requirements, we are immediately going to know.” Such unprecedented measures could serve as a basis for improved regional nuclear non-proliferation system in the Middle East. A final agreement on the nuclear file expected by end of June this year would also open the pathway for further discussions between Iran and world powers on pressing regional issues—such as stability and security in Iraq, Syria and the fight against extremism—that have sunk the Middle East into chaos. Another positive development from the nuclear talks is the extensive bilateral discussions between US and Iran. While decades of mistrust and animosity can not be wished away, the fact that both sides have engagement openly at the highest level ever since the 1979 Revolution is a positive development for broader normalization between the two countries.

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