

Friday, 17 April 2015

Recommend 1

Iran, a Deal Based on Dialogue Will be a Win-Win for Everyone

Seyed Hossein Mousavian interviewed by Marina Forti

The historic political framework agreement reached by Iran and the world powers last April 2 in Lausanne, Switzerland, on Tehran's nuclear program has the potential of changing the entire landscape in the Middle East and beyond. Iran and the group called 5+1 (the permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) have indeed found a formula that would reassure the international community on the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program, while terminating all unilateral and multilateral economic sanctions imposed on Tehran. If they succeed in developing a comprehensive deal by the end of June, as it is expected, it will certainly mark a major geopolitical shift, as it will probably open the way for cooperation between Iran and the United States well beyond the nuclear file, on other areas of common interest.

Focus in/Focus out

Why the West Needs to Reach an Agreement with Iran on the Nuclear Issue Emma Bonino
interviewed by Antonella Rampino
The Importance of Dialogue Gholamali Khoshroo, Iran
Sanctions on Iran: a 30-year-long history Antonella Vicini

Sure, the road to a comprehensive deal is still bumpy, not the least because there are many opponents both in Tehran and in Washington - and in the wider Middle East. It is safe to assume that the difference in accents used in the two capitals to summarize the Lausanne agreement is at least in part due to the need to «sell» it to each part's internal opponents. With an important difference though: in Iran all the powerful figures within the political establishment have publicly expressed support to the agreement – starting with the Supreme Leader ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who might have expressed his usual skepticism toward the United States and insisted that Tehran will not accept a comprehensive nuclear deal if all sanctions were not lifted, but significantly added that «if the other side avoids its ambiguity in the talks, it will be an experience showing *it is possible to negotiate with them on other issues*» (emphasis added). In Washington, on the contrary, the Us Senate voted (and president Barack Obama accepted) that the Congress will have the power to review any deal with Iran, in fact limiting the president's ability to waive many US sanctions on Tehran before the reviews is completed. A setback for Obama.

Yet, the expectations for a comprehensive deal remain high.

«Definitely, the agreement is a historic achievement and definitely, this is a road to peace because the deal practically prevented a new war in the Middle East», says Ambassador Seyed Hossein Mousavian in an interview with Resetdoc.

A research scholar at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, Mousavian is a former diplomat; he served as Iran's Ambassador to Germany in the '90s and later acted as spokesperson for Iran's nuclear negotiators in 2003 to 2005, when Tehran engaged in nuclear talks with the European Union. In the last few years he has been one of the most effective Iranian voices in the United States promoting US-Iran reconciliation (his latest book is “Iran and the United States: An Insider's view on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace”).

Ambassador Mousavian, what is your assessment of the framework agreement reached in Lausanne by Iran and the 5+1 world powers?

I believe diplomacy worked. The negotiators have achieved a realistic conclusion and they should continue to reach a final comprehensive deal by end of June. If such a comprehensive deal is reached and fully implemented, it will be a win-win for all parties involved.

For Iran, two points were important. The first was for the international community to accept and respect Iran's rights for peaceful nuclear technology, including enrichment, as a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Npt). This was the first key issue for Iran since we began nuclear negotiations in 2003. Now, under this deal Iran would be entitled to have peaceful nuclear technology. The second key issue for Iran was lifting the sanctions: and this deal also contains, ultimately, lifting all unilateral and multilateral nuclear-related sanctions. That is why I believe it is a good deal for Iran.

However, the deal is also good for the U.S. and the world powers, since for them the red line was that any deal would guarantee no diversion of the Iranian nuclear program toward weaponization. Although Iran does not have a nuclear bomb and there is no evidence of diversion in Iranian nuclear program, however, Iran has accepted to address the concerns of the 5+1 over nuclear weapons proliferation. In fact, Iran has accepted all confidence building measures and agreed the highest level of transparency and verification ever in the history of nonproliferation – well beyond the current NPT.

You took part in a previous attempt of negotiation in 2003-2005. In your view what made a deal possible now, after so many years of failed attempts?

The narrative in the US Congress is that the deal is done because of the American sanctions and pressures. But the framework agreement reached in Lausanne follows exactly the same principles and frameworks we proposed to the European countries in 2003 and 2005, when I served as then spokesperson for the Iranian negotiators team. Iran was not on sanctions then. After eight years of sanctions and pressures, the U.S. accepted the same principles. Why the deal was possible? Only one reason: in 2003 to 2005 the United States was not ready to accept the legitimate rights of Iran to have enrichment on its soil according to the Npt. The US would say that enrichment was the red line, Iran should have zero enrichment.

In 2013 though the preliminary deal was signed. The U.S. moderated its position, accepted Iran to have enrichment based on NPT, although limited to its practical needs. It was not pressures and sanctions to make the deal possible. In fact, sanctions only accelerated Iran's nuclear program. Consider: before sanctions Iran had a few hundred of centrifuges; was enriching below 5 percent and had a few hundred kilogram of stockpile of enriched uranium. After the sanctions, Iran had 22,000 centrifuges installed, has a stockpile of 9000 kilogram enriched uranium and increased the enrichment to 20 percent. When the U.S. recognized Iran has only three months to breakout, then they finally accepted enrichment in Iran and decided to have verification, transparency, and change the red line from zero enrichment to zero nuclear bomb.

Definitely, sanctions harmed the Iranian economy and the Iranian nation. There is no doubt about it. But, if the objective of sanctions was limiting the Iranian nuclear program, this was totally counterproductive. This is a good lesson: more pressure and threat, Iran would become more aggressive. But negotiating with Iran based on mutual respect and on international rules and regulations, you would find a very cooperative, flexible Iran.

A deal between Iran and the 5+1 is openly opposed by other players in the Middle East, Israel in the first place. What do you think would be the impact of a deal in the broader Middle Eastern scene?

There is a big difference between Iran and Israel. Iran is member of the Nonproliferation Treaty and does not have nuclear weapons; Israel never joined the NPT and has about 400 nuclear bombs. During last 10 years, Iran has given more than 7000 mandate inspections to International Atomic Energy Agency, the Iaea: no other country in the world has given such wide access to the Atomic Agency as Iran did. Israel has not given even one inspection to the Iaea: but the country which does have nuclear bomb is blaming Iran, which does not have nuclear bomb.

Iran has accepted every level of inspection, more than any country and well beyond any international nuclear non-proliferation monitoring, verification and inspection regime. Such unprecedented measures could serve as a basis for improved regional nuclear non-proliferation system in the Middle East.

In fact, should the dispute over Iran's nuclear program be resolved, it will certainly prepare ground for cooperation between Iran and the United States on other issues. The two countries have common interests in the Middle East, from combating drugs to stability in Iraq and in Afghanistan, to containing and ultimately eradicating the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and putting an end to the Syrian civil war. A comprehensive resolution based upon mutual respect of the nuclear issues could be a promising first step.

Recommend One person recommends this. Be the first of your friends.

©2015 Reset Dialogues on Civilizations