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Missile Dialogue Between Iran And The West

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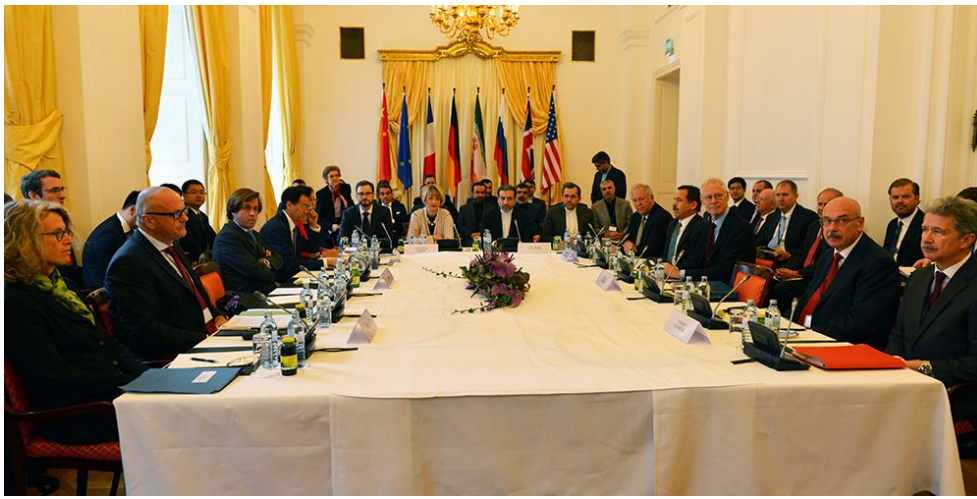
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by *Seyed Hossein Mousavian*

U.S. President Donald Trump has made it clear that his opposition to the Iran nuclear deal —known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)—is mainly rooted in Iran’s missile program and regional policies. Meanwhile, the European powers that seek to preserve the deal have latched onto U.S. concerns about Iran’s missile and regional policies in an apparent bid to convince Trump to maintain U.S. commitment to the JCPOA.

During the nuclear negotiations in 2011 and 2012, when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was Iran’s president and Saeed Jalili the chief Iranian nuclear negotiator, I heard repeatedly from Western sources with knowledge of the talks that Iran was offering to put regional issues up for negotiation. However, the Western powers insisted on confining the negotiations to the nuclear issue. Today, the United States and European powers have apparently changed their view and wish to negotiate with Iran on matters beyond its nuclear program.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian recently stated (<https://www.rferl.org/a/france-iran-nuclear-ballistic-missiles-trump-russia-german-britain-china/28988804.html>) that he would discuss Iran’s ballistic missile program during a March 5 trip to Tehran. Before any talk of missile negotiations with Iran, it is first necessary for U.S. and European officials to think about the following realities regarding the Iranian missile program and U.S. negotiations with Iran.

In January 2016, the JCPOA was implemented by way of agreement between the United States, five other world powers, and Iran after having been endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution. Since then, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has issued nine reports confirming (<https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran/181-iran-nuclear-deal-two-status-report>) Iranian full compliance with the deal. President Trump, on the other hand, has since coming to office telegraphed his desire to terminate the JCPOA regardless of the facts. With such a track record, how can the European powers expect Iran to trust America to negotiate on other issues?

For decades, the United States and other Western powers have imposed a conventional arms embargo on Iran while at the same time propping up Iranian regional rivals Israel and Saudi Arabia with hundreds of billions of dollars’ worth of the latest weapons systems. The result has been a destabilizing conventional weapons imbalance in the region. This is on top of the fact that the Iranian defense budget is far smaller (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/10/the-myth-of-the-iranian-military-giant/>) than that of Saudi Arabia, Israel, or the United Arab Emirates, even though their combined population is less than Iran’s.

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Furthermore, Iran's Supreme Leader has voluntarily limited (<https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-says-supreme-leader-limiting-ballistic-missile-range/4094256.html>) the range of Iran's ballistic missiles to 2,000 kilometers, while Saudi Arabia's Chinese-supplied missiles have a range of upwards of 4,000 kilometers. "Certainly true that Iran has ballistic missiles with regional reach. But so have others in that region. Saudi Arabia has Chinese-supplied ones. Israel have advanced ones with nuclear capability," said (<https://twitter.com/carlbildt/status/955837687306575876>) former Swedish President Carl Bildt. The question thus arises of whether the United States and European powers believe in the merits of a conventional weapons balance in the region?

The United States, the major European powers, and their regional Arab allies all supported (<http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/26/world/us-secretly-gave-aid-to-iraq-early-in-its-war-against-iran.html?pagewanted=all>) Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's war of aggression against Iran during the 1980s and abetted (<http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/08/26/exclusive-cia-files-prove-america-helped-saddam-as-he-gassed-iran/>) his use of ballistic missiles and chemical weapons during the conflict. Today, the Trump White House is overtly pursuing a regime-change policy through ratcheting up sanctions, seeking to eliminate Iran's regional strategic depth, and supporting (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/02/us/politics/trump-iran-protesters.html>) unrest within the country. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman has for his part promised (<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/will-saudi-arabia-take-battle-iran-americas-blessing-473465860>) to take "the battle" inside Iran, and Saudi officials for years have urged (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/28/us-embassy-cables-saudis-iran>) the U.S. to attack Iran militarily. Are U.S. leaders prepared, in accordance with the UN charter, to respect Iran's legitimate government and put an end to threats and regime-change policies?

Israel is the only (<http://www.mepc.org/journal/israel-and-nuclear-proliferation-middle-east>) nuclear-weapons state in the Middle East. By having agreed to the JCPOA and being one of the original signatories of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran has demonstrated its commitment to zero (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/node/328996>) nuclear weapons. Based on several treaties and a UN resolution on a nuclear-free zone in the region, Europe and the United States have also committed (<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/mewmdfz>) to fostering a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Are the Western powers ready to take serious steps to meet their obligations in this area?

It is natural that Iran's circumstances—and the real and serious threats it is up against—push it to view with suspicion Western aims to negotiate over its missile program. Iranian officials are united in the view that efforts to curtail (<http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/10/26/contain-enforce-and-engage-integrated-u.s.-strategy-to-address-iran-s-nuclear-and-regional-challenges-pub-73484>) its missile and deterrence capabilities are ultimately aimed at weakening the ability of Iran to defend itself and preserve its territorial integrity.

In recent meetings with Iranian officials, I have consistently heard the same refrain: that with regime change the name of the game in Washington, the Trump White House wishes to eliminate Iran's missile capacity and defensive capabilities simultaneous with scuttling the JCPOA and re-imposing nuclear sanctions, all to prepare the grounds for a military attack on Iran. The Europeans, meanwhile, are viewed as playing (https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trumps-dangerous-good-cop-bad-cop-foreign-policy/2017/04/21/9d48efb0-26c9-11e7-bb9d-8cd6118e1409_story.html?utm_term=.9097fe8cdda5) the "good cop" to America's "bad cop" in pushing for missile negotiations.

Given the realities surrounding the Iranian missile program, Europe and the United States must first address Iran's reasonable concerns before insisting on missile negotiations. If Europe does not want to be led to war by the Tel Aviv-Riyadh-White House axis, as French President Emmanuel Macron has warned (<http://www.newsweek.com/us-israel-saudi-arabia-leading-world-war-iran-france-says-770728>), it must put realistic diplomatic options on the table that incorporate legitimate Iranian security concerns.

In Persian there is an expression (<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/irans-javad-zarif-on-the-fraying-nuclear-deal-u-s-relations-and-holocaust-cartoons>): "First one must prove brotherhood before demanding an inheritance." The JCPOA represents the first comprehensive non-proliferation agreement that eliminates all pathways to a nuclear weapon. By first properly implementing the JCPOA, Europe and the United States have an opportunity to use the precedent the agreement has established to achieve the goal of a Middle East free from nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction.

Seyed Hossein Mousavian is a Middle East security and nuclear policy specialist at Princeton University, former spokesperson of Iran's nuclear dossier and author of "Iran and the United States: An Insider's View on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace." @HMousavian. Photo: meeting of the JCPOA negotiators.

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Iran, after the “Revolution” that was supposed to be in support of the “suppressed” (all over the world), has sought regional hegemony—from the Levant in the West, and Afghanistan in the East. I am aware of its preparations in Afghanistan, which will be fully activated when Iran has acquired enough trained Afghan Shias, in the battle to prop the Asad regime in Syria. As a result of this regional hegemony, the people of Iran are left in poverty as the real “suppressed.” I resent the US global hegemony, and Israel’s equally hegemonic Zionism. And Iran is no different in these hegemonic pursuits. Perhaps, in this coming clash among the three hegemonic powers, there will be relief for those who are “suppressed” by all three.



JANUARY 29, 2018 ([HTTPS://LOBELOG.COM/MISSILE-DIALOGUE-BETWEEN-IRAN-AND-THE-WEST/#COMMENT-664717](https://lobeblog.com/missile-dialogue-between-iran-and-the-west/#comment-664717))

MONTY AHWAZI

Thank you Mr Mousavian. I’ve read many good articles since approval of the JCOPA by the 5+1 countries. And made many comments!

I could be one of the few American Persian descent who believes Mr Rouhani when he was the head of Iran’s National Security Apparatus in 2003 made a major political error by convincing the leadership of Iran to ban their pursuit of the nuclear bomb! I think that Iran is going to feel a tremendous amount of political and economical pressure from EU & US to ban their missiles program. And banning their missiles programs west will find other excuses to apply pressure and perhaps a regime change!

But I’m optimistic and my recommendation to the leadership of Iran is to borrow or purchas a few mini-bomb from NK and then tell the west, Israel and Saudis to shut the hell up!



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JOJI CHERIAN

([HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/APP_SCOPED_USER_ID/1115827168497689/](https://www.facebook.com/app_scoped_user_id/1115827168497689/))

The country that really needs a regime change is the USA.Change from not Republicans or Democrats or vice versa.Both these parties and all other establishments in America, be it the congress ,financial institutions media,they are owned and controlled by a lobby which owes its loyalty to a foreign nation.Its law makers are owned by this treacherous gang.As of now America is a bonded nation with no freedom,not even freedom of expression, in the real sense.One can not see a constitutional way to extricate America from this.So wait for an event or events that change the fate of nations.I think time is overdue and America is waiting for a leader to lead her to real freedom and restore America to Americans.



JANUARY 29, 2018 ([HTTPS://LOBELOG.COM/MISSILE-DIALOGUE-BETWEEN-IRAN-AND-THE-WEST/#COMMENT-664709](https://lobeblog.com/missile-dialogue-between-iran-and-the-west/#comment-664709))

CYRUS

There was actually no evidence of a nuclear weapons program prior to 2003 and the IAEA report on Iran said it only found “scattered and incomplete studies” that it said were merely “relevant to” nukes (not clear what that means but in any case that’s not even close to a violation of the NPT.) Iran’s “nukes” are just another pretext for a policy of imposing regime-change in Iran, no different that “WMDs in Iraq” and now they’ve picked on another excuse, that’s all.



JANUARY 29, 2018 ([HTTPS://LOBELOG.COM/MISSILE-DIALOGUE-BETWEEN-IRAN-AND-THE-WEST/#COMMENT-664702](https://lobelog.com/missile-dialogue-between-iran-and-the-west/#comment-664702))

PAUL E. MERRELL

([HTTPS://RELATIVELYFREEPRESS.BLOGSPOT.COM/](https://relativelyfreepress.blogspot.com/))

Israel's (and later Saudi Arabia's) desire to have the U.S. wage war against Iran has been the drive behind the Iranian Nukes Myth since the git-go. It has been the consensus position of all U.S. intelligence agencies since 2007 that Iran has had no nuclear weapons program since 2003. Mossad agrees that Iran has no such program. But according to one poll, Israel's propaganda resulted in 80 percent of adult Americans believing that Iran already has nuclear weapons and poses an imminent threat to the U.S. The Obama administration finessed that situation without confronting the public misunderstanding through negotiating the JCPOA.

I agree that Trump's "missile" ploy is about weakening Iran's defenses to military invasion. Israel's right-wing government has not given up on its goal to have the U.S. military invade Iran. Why such a move would be in the interests of the U.S. has never been explained nor do I think it could be satisfactorily.

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