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Outlining a Possible Deal with Iran

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Given the international drive to negotiate a deal between Iran and the United States and/or the P5+1 over Iran's nuclear program, what follows is an outline of a possible agreement based on the components considered critical to both sides.¹ It seems that both sides are interested in an agreement, which would neutralize the inevitable crisis liable to lead to a United States and/or Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. A viable agreement would include elements essential to each side, as well as elements that guarantee critical interests of the other side.

In addition to the nuclear issue, there are several strategic issues that have long been a source of conflict between the United States and Iran: Iran's support and use of terrorism; human rights violations in Iran; Iran's ambition for hegemony in the Persian Gulf and the entire Middle East; and Iran's hostility against Israel, to the point of calling for Israel's destruction. These issues might be more easily approached when there are actual serious discussions toward a solution to the nuclear issue.

On the Iranian side, any agreement with the United States would be seen as submitting to the Great Satan, although Iran could undoubtedly present an agreement containing the elements critical to its interests as an impressive victory, enabling it to justify negotiations and an agreement with America.

What follows are the critical and not essentially incompatible components of both sides that could conceivably form the basis for a future agreement.

The components critical to the United States:

- *The key element:* To preclude a situation in which Iran would be able to break out and enrich uranium to a military level in less than one year.
- To preclude a situation in which Iran would have the capability of reprocessing irradiated fuel from any source and producing significant quantities of plutonium.
- To preclude R&D of nuclear explosive mechanisms.

¹ There is no essential difference between an agreement with the United States and one with the P5+1.

- To establish a specifically designated verification regime to validate the agreement on an ongoing basis without any possibility of unilateral withdrawal or the introduction of changes to the regime.

The components critical to Iran:

- *The basic (unstated) element:* To retain the technology and option of developing nuclear arms should it decide to do so.
- To maintain the full right to have a civilian nuclear project for peaceful purposes.
- To maintain the full right to enrich uranium to provide nuclear fuel for reactors for peaceful purposes.
- To compel the UN Security Council and individual states to lift all the current sanctions against Iran.
- To place the supervision of Iran's nuclear projects in the hands of the IAEA rather than any designated nation or group of nations.
- To prohibit the United States from trying to topple the Iranian regime.

Outline for a Possible Agreement

Preface

Both sides acknowledge Iran's inalienable right to maintain and develop a civilian nuclear project for peaceful purposes. The goal of this agreement is to realize this right.

Core of agreement: The political context

1. The agreement is between the United States and Iran and is supported by the P5+1, with the IAEA being an active partner.
2. The sides hereby declare an end to hostile relations between them.
3. The two nations will maintain routine, continuous contact.
4. The United States will lift its sanctions and will work to lift the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council and other nations. The sanctions will be lifted in stages based on progress in the implementation of the agreement, especially regarding the removal of enriched uranium from Iran and the closure of the Fordow enrichment plant.

Technical: Materials production

1. The cumulative ability to enrich uranium in Iran using all technologies will be limited to 5,000 kg SWU per year.
2. No Uranium-235 will be enriched beyond the 5 percent level in Iran; it will be used exclusively at the nuclear power plant in Bushehr. Uranium enrichment by any method will be limited to the Natanz facility.
3. Any and all nuclear activity at the Fordow plant will be suspended and all enrichment equipment will be dismantled and moved elsewhere.

4. As soon as a supply of 500 kg of enriched uranium (in the form of the UF₆ compound) is reached in Iran, this amount will immediately be removed to produce fuel of the UO₂ compound for the Bushehr reactor either at the uranium conversion facility in Iran or in Russia.
5. All irradiated nuclear fuel from the Bushehr plant will be removed to Russia. Nuclear fuel for other reactors will be purchased from outside Iran. Purchase contracts will include the obligation to return the fuel to its country of origin after irradiation.
6. Iran will not operate the IR-40 reactor under construction in Arak and will not construct or operate any other reactor powered by fuel enriched below the 3.5 percent level.
7. Iran will not irradiate natural uranium or any other material that could be used to produce plutonium and will not irradiate materials that could be used to produce tritium.
8. All activity linked to extracting plutonium from irradiated nuclear fuel will be prohibited except in laboratory settings at an irradiated fuel weight not to exceed one kilogram per year.

Verification: Augmented international monitoring

1. The purpose of the verification regime is to guarantee that Iran upholds all parts of the agreement exactly as specified and does not engage in any prohibited or clandestine activity according to this agreement.
2. The verification system will be based on information gathered by its own sources and on other information that will serve as the basis for planning the system's activities.
3. Iran will again ratify the Additional Protocol whose expansion will serve as the basis for augmented verification in accordance with the current agreement.
4. The expansion of verification will include:
 - 4.1 Free access to every site and facility in Iran.
 - 4.2 Permission to sample and measure anywhere in Iran and anywhere in Iranian sovereign territory.
 - 4.3 Unlimited access to documentation and records, including computers and scientific and technical documentations.
 - 4.4 Unlimited access to Iranian personnel.
 - 4.5 Continuous photographic monitoring at sensitive locations to be determined by the verification system. The photographs will be transmitted in real time to a verification center outside Iran. Any interference with photography will be checked immediately.

5. An independent, international committee of experts will be established to oversee the results of the verification system's activities and to resolve disputes about the interpretation of verification results should the need arise.

Fulfilling the agreement

1. The agreement will go into effect 30 days after being signed. The agreement will be cancelled automatically if it is not ratified by both nations within the following 60 days.
2. The agreement is unlimited by time, and any change is subject to agreement by both sides.
3. Any violation of the agreement, as determined by the committee of experts, will automatically result in the renewal of the full range of sanctions without the need for further decisions.
4. Any administrative violation, such as limiting verification activities, will automatically result in the renewal of sanctions without the need for further decisions.

Discussion

Is such an agreement possible? Iran is very interested in buying more time and continuing to expand its nuclear infrastructures, whereas the United States is interested in dialogue and engagement as the lowest risk strategy for ending the Iranian nuclear threat. An analysis of the respective interests shows that there is potential sphere of mutual agreement. If the United States grants Iran the victory-in-principle – the right to enrich uranium – and if Iran agrees to limited enriched amounts, augmented inspection, and the removal of most of the enriched product from Iran, an agreement is not impossible. Negotiations would have to end within 60 days; if no agreement is reached by that time, negotiations would then be declared to have failed.

The agreement does not entirely prevent the possibility of Iran continuing clandestine nuclear activities. There is no doubt that Iran will try to push the envelope further and manufacture crises to test the other side's resolve. Furthermore, it will be difficult to determine that a serious violation has occurred and even more difficult to restore the sanctions.

From Israel's perspective, such an agreement is not good news, because it does not, once and for all, put an end to the Iranian military nuclear program; it merely delays the program for an unknown amount of time. However, Israel may well be coerced into going along. Israel's inherent distrust of the current Iranian regime, based on experience, will not allow it to give its blessing to such an arrangement. Should the unlikely occur and Iran meticulously adheres to the agreement without ostensibly bowing to outside coercion, a new situation will emerge, one that could perhaps allow for a new relationship with the Islamic Republic. In reality, however, the probability of this scenario is minimal.