



*INSS Insight* No. 489, November 27, 2013

**The Geneva Agreement:  
Neither a “Historic Agreement” nor a “Historic Failure”**

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From the reactions of senior Israeli government officials, one might think that Iran left Geneva with approval from the P5+1 to develop nuclear weapons, and that the agreement reached will allow Iran to become a “nuclear threshold state.”

The agreement signed in Geneva is a preliminary and partial agreement only, with limited steps required of each side and valid for six months, during which time the P5+1 and Iran will attempt to reach a final, comprehensive agreement. Nevertheless, interim agreements have a tendency to evolve into permanent agreements, particularly if efforts to reach a final agreement are unsuccessful. Israel would have preferred a final agreement already at this stage – an agreement in which Iran’s breakout time to nuclear weapons will be measured in years and not in months. Israel must now work to increase the chances that such an agreement is in fact reached in the coming six months.

Despite his firm opposition to the agreement – or perhaps because of it – Prime Minister Netanyahu can take credit for an improvement in the parameters in the agreement, compared to what was proposed to Iran two weeks earlier. He has helped transform a “very bad” agreement into an agreement that can be lived with – for six months. On the plus side of the agreement is that this is the first time since 2003 that the Iranian nuclear program has been stopped and is even being rolled back, albeit to a limited degree. For the first time in years, the time it could take Iran to break out to nuclear weapons – which is the leading parameter for measuring the danger of the Iranian program – will be lengthened, rather than shortened. Even if this is only a slight improvement, the change in direction is significant. Halting the process of enrichment to 20 percent, converting uranium already enriched to 20 percent, freezing the size of the stockpile of 3.5 percent enriched material and of the total number of installed and operating centrifuges, suspending the plutonium track at Arak, and most important, strengthening and intensifying supervision – all these are important achievements in a preliminary agreement. Nevertheless, they are unacceptable as parameters for a final agreement. In

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My thanks to Avner Golov for his important contribution in preparation of this article.

the final agreement, it will be necessary to make certain that the time it takes Iran to break out to a nuclear weapon is measured in years rather than in months, primarily through a dramatic reduction in the number of centrifuges and the removal of the stockpile of enriched uranium from Iran.

In return for the restrictions on the Iranian nuclear program, the P5+1 have approved a limited easing of the sanctions, which will yield Iran an estimated \$7 billion. The firm message from the White House regarding its commitment to enforce the sanctions and to punish those firms that may attempt to bypass the sanctions during the negotiations reduces the chances that the preliminary agreement will lead to the collapse of the sanctions regime.

Following announcement of the agreement, new important commitments were sounded by President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry to stop the Iranian nuclear program, and to achieve that goal, to a significant degree, in the final agreement. The United States has also underscored that the preliminary agreement is not an acceptable final arrangement.

Among the shortcomings of the preliminary agreement is that Iran has been freed from the Security Council’s demands that it completely dismantle its nuclear infrastructure. Nor does the preliminary agreement demand that Iran provide answers to various open questions regarding the military aspects of its nuclear program, even though this is a demand made by the International Atomic Energy Agency. In addition, the preliminary agreement does not *de jure* recognize Iran’s right to enrich uranium independently – but it does allow Iran to continue to enrich uranium up to 3.5 percent, and to assemble new centrifuges in place of those that are damaged. As such it gives *de facto* legitimacy to the Iranian demand for recognition of its right to enrich uranium. Finally, the agreement does not establish an efficient mechanism for uncovering undisclosed sites connected to the Iranian nuclear program. The agreement’s terms are based on the assumption that over the next six months Iran will not work in any undisclosed sites to advance its nuclear program. However, this assumption is somewhat suspect, since all of Iran’s declared sites were built secretly and were only revealed by Iranian opposition organizations and Western intelligence organizations.

One should not compare the agreement to an “ideal agreement” drafted in the spirit of Security Council Resolution 1737, or to some other optimal scenario whereby if the Geneva agreement had not been signed Iran would collapse economically and then be prepared to renounce its nuclear capabilities. In all realism, had the negotiations collapsed, Iran would certainly have continued to enrich its uranium up to levels of 20 percent, operate the advanced centrifuges, and continue the construction of the heavy water reactor at Arak. Failure of the talks would likely have ended the cooperation among the P5+1 against Iran, following which the sanctions regime would have begun to crack –

and with Israel blamed by the international community for the failure of the talks. Given this likely alternative scenario, the preliminary agreement reached at Geneva is not entirely bad. Iran reached the status of a threshold state long before this agreement, and not because of it. Indeed, it has been a threshold state for several years already, and continues to shorten the breakout time.

Recommendations for Israel to influence the final agreement and prepare for non-attainment of an agreement include:

- a. It would not be right for Israel to “sabotage” the agreement in the coming six months – neither through a military attack nor through its friends in Congress. It is necessary to exhaust the attempt to reach a good agreement, and if the attempt is ultimately unsuccessful, it will be important to make clear that the Iranians are to blame for the failure, not Israel.
- b. The P5+1 must be allowed to stop the Iranian nuclear program and distance it from the acquisition of nuclear weapons through a final agreement that addresses all the issues that were not resolved adequately in the preliminary agreement. The West still has leverage it can use to achieve this process – the Iranians need additional sanctions eased, as these continue to impose a significant burden on them.
- c. The responsibility and commitment of the P5+1 to prevent Iran from acquiring a military nuclear capability must be emphasized; this responsibility increases in light of the agreement that was formulated.
- d. The two forms of leverage that led Iran to the negotiating table and to the concessions they were unwilling to make previously, i.e., the sanctions, and a credible military threat, must remain in place.
- e. The sanctions leverage can be preserved through the prevention of new transactions between international companies and Iran, and through expanded pending legislation in Congress imposing additional sanctions in the event of a violation of the agreement or expiration of the agreement accompanied by an Iranian attempt to gain time until a final agreement is reached.
- f. The threat of a military attack should be sharpened through the development of a surgical strike option to be directed only at the Iranian nuclear program, and a clear American statement of how strong and comprehensive Washington’s response will be to a violation of the agreement, or to the discovery of a nuclear infrastructure that was hidden by the Iranians, or to a situation in which Iran expands the conflict after a pinpoint attack.
- g. Israel must resume a close and intensive dialogue with the Americans regarding the parameters of a final agreement. Jerusalem and Washington should be on the same page regarding the seven key issues needed in a final agreement: the level of enrichment in the Iranian program, the number of centrifuges, the inventory of uranium to be removed from Iran, the future of the Fordow site, the non-operation

of the plutonium reactor in Arak, the extent of future supervision of the program, and the closing of the open questions concerning the weapons issues.

- h. As part of the stronger cooperation, Israel’s intelligence organizations must formulate, together with their American counterparts, a response to the “holes” in the preliminary agreement, in order to uncover Iranian breaches of the agreement, Iranian efforts in the military sphere, or activity at undisclosed sites.

Iran must be put to the test of a final agreement that rolls back its program and lengthens to a considerable degree the breakout period should it violate the agreement, as did North Korea. At the same time, it is not at all clear that a final agreement such as this can be reached with the Iranians – especially if the economic and military threats are not maintained. Israel must therefore prepare a Plan B – in the event of a failure to reach what will be, in its eyes, a “good agreement” – which will include:

- a. Obtaining a guarantee from the Americans that there will be no extension of the preliminary agreement and that it will not evolve into a permanent arrangement.
- b. Agreeing in advance regarding the re-imposition of those sanctions that have been lifted, and already beginning to work on enacting legislation regarding additional sanctions to be imposed immediately at the end of the six months.
- c. Preparing an independent Israeli plan of action in the event that there is no agreement or that the interim agreement becomes a “bad” final agreement, which leaves Iran only a few months away from acquiring a nuclear bomb.

Only six months or one year from now will we be in a position to assess the value of the agreement that was signed on Sunday in Geneva: only then will we know whether it is similar to the 1938 Munich agreement, which within one year was exposed in all its ignominy, or whether it is more like the Camp David agreement, which within one year led to the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel.

