

# The Interim Deal on the Iranian Nuclear Program: Toward a Comprehensive Solution?

Emily B. Landau and Anat Kurz, Editors



Memorandum **142**

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THE INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

INCORPORATING THE JAFFEE  
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TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY  
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# The Interim Deal on the Iranian Nuclear Program: Toward a Comprehensive Solution?

Emily B. Landau and Anat Kurz, Editors

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Memorandum No. 142

September 2014

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# הסכם הביניים על תוכנית הגרעין האיראנית: לקראת הסכם כולל?

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**Institute for National Security Studies** (a public benefit company)

40 Haim Levanon Street

POB 39950

Ramat Aviv

Tel Aviv 6997556

Tel. +972-3-640-0400

Fax. +972-3-744-7590

E-mail: [info@inss.org.il](mailto:info@inss.org.il)

<http://www.inss.org.il>

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## Preface

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The eleven essays compiled in this volume represent concise analyses of some of the key issues that have emerged in the context of efforts over the past months to carve out a “good” nuclear deal with Iran, while also highlighting a number of perspectives that have not been at the heart of debate.

The Joint Plan of Action (JPOA), also known as the interim deal with Iran, secured in late November 2013 and implemented from January 20, 2014, was intended to create space for the tough negotiations with Iran over a comprehensive and final nuclear deal that would close the Iranian nuclear file. A deal was not secured by the original July 20, 2014 deadline, and negotiations were extended for another four months. This is the context for the collection of essays that follows.

It would be hard to overstate the difficulty that the P5+1 negotiators face in bargaining with Iran over its nuclear program, and the current prospects for a strong, constructive nuclear deal look very dim. In this difficult negotiation, the ability of the P5+1 to apply pressure on Iran will be a key factor affecting the likelihood of securing a good agreement. President Obama has expressed his doubts about prospects for concluding an acceptable deal, and he is on record saying that no deal would be better than a “bad” deal with Iran. However, the terms of a bad deal have never been clarified by the administration. This has led some analysts to suspect that the administration is actually averse to the prospect of having to pronounce this negotiation to have failed – so much so that almost any deal that Iran is willing to entertain is likely to be accepted in the end, justified as being better than no deal. If these analysts are correct, projection of eagerness for a deal no doubt undermines the ability of the P5+1 to advance a tough line at the bargaining table, which weakens their collective hand in pressing Iran to accept their terms.

Highlighting some of the dilemmas that have emerged as the international negotiators move toward the new deadline of November 24, 2014, the collection begins with essays that address general principles for negotiating

with Iran; Iran's advances in the nuclear realm; the situation regarding economic sanctions; and the US-Israel-Iran deterrence triangle. Essays in the next section deal with the broader context for assessing the situation: specifically, whether Iran has indeed shifted to a more moderate stance; the fate of the military option vis-à-vis Iran; and US public opinion on talks with Iran. Regional perspectives on the negotiations dynamic are the focus of the next group of essays, which deal with Israel, the Gulf states, and Turkey. The volume closes with an essay that lays out the contours of an acceptable deal from Israel's perspective.

One issue also addressed, which over recent months has become a major concern, is the challenge posed by the Islamic State (IS), and the question whether the US and the broader international community should cooperate with Iran in confronting this threat. The issue is of paramount importance because of the adverse consequences that such cooperation could have for the fragile nuclear negotiations. Some leading figures, including Prime Minister of Britain David Cameron, have entertained the idea of cooperating with Iran in confronting the brutal extremist jihadi organization, while putting aside the implications for the nuclear file. Others warn that Iran is the greater menace, and argue that the very message that the international community is considering cooperation with Iran in facing the IS threat weakens the international hand at a critical moment in the nuclear negotiations. Beyond the danger of cooperating with Iran, these analysts question why the international community cannot confront the extremist terrorists without Tehran's assistance.

As the negotiators approach the final stretch of the four month extension of the talks, our hope is that this collection of articles – in some cases grappling anew with issues that have been under review, in other cases pinpointing less common themes that deserve attention – will add important insights to the overall debate regarding nuclear negotiations with Iran, and the implication of developments since this past November, when the interim deal was concluded.

Emily B. Landau and Anat Kurz  
September 2014

# PART I

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## Toward a Comprehensive Deal

### **Principles and Guidelines for a Comprehensive Nuclear Deal with Iran**

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# Principles and Guidelines for a Comprehensive Nuclear Deal with Iran

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Emily B. Landau

## Introduction

The “interim deal” with Iran – also known as the Joint Plan of Action (JPA or JPOA) – was announced on November 24, 2013, and implemented on January 20, 2014 for a six-month period. After the parties failed to reach a deal within this time framework, a decision was taken on July 20, 2014 to extend the negotiation period for another four months, until November 24, 2014.

The interim deal was never intended to be more than a temporary arrangement that would put time on the clock in order to enable the P5+1 negotiators the time and space they needed to negotiate a comprehensive nuclear deal with Iran that would put an end to the decade-long crisis. The United States was very clear about this, and the deal was presented as a necessary agreement so that for the duration of the negotiations with Iran – which were expected to take months – this proliferator would not be able to proceed unhindered with its nuclear activities. However, while Iran did agree to halt uranium enrichment to the 20 percent level, the deal enabled other activities to continue. Moreover, not surprisingly – and this is the danger of interim deals – the deal has also taken on a life of its own, and has been (ab)used by Iran as a benchmark for what should and should not be covered in the comprehensive deal. But this was never the stated intention of the deal.

Be that as it may, it is the comprehensive deal with Iran that is intended to be the final deal. As its name alludes, this deal is meant to cover all of Iran’s nuclear program’s problematic aspects, with the aim of distancing Iran from the ability to move quickly and undetected toward development

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Dr. Emily B. Landau is a senior research fellow and head of the Arms Control and Regional Security Program at INSS.

of a nuclear bomb. While the P5+1 negotiators should be pressing – using the leverage they gained with the biting sanctions of 2012 – to bring Iran to the point where it signals its intention to back away from its military nuclear ambitions, the negotiating powers have deemed this an unachievable goal. Instead, and contrary to their long-held goal, their current aim is much more modest – to extend Iran’s breakout time to a nuclear weapon, should it decide on this course of action. In other words, the international negotiators are no longer trying to get Iran to reverse course in the nuclear realm by indicating that it is backing away from its military aspirations. Rather, at this point they seek only to slow it down, with the hope that they will be able to prevent in time an Iranian rush to concretize its military nuclear capability.

### **The Elusive Criterion of “Clear Evidence” of Violation**

This more limited goal is a dangerous gamble; success critically depends on the responsible international actors’ ability to act in a timely manner to stop Iran. That implies that they will be able to successfully manage three crucial tasks: to detect that Iran has committed a violation and is moving to produce nuclear weapons; to secure international agreement that this Iranian violation has indeed occurred, is significant, and needs to be confronted; and to then act on this information – in a quick, coordinated, and determined manner to stop Iran.

This is a tall order; indeed, there are potential problems at every turn. In order to understand what *could* go wrong, all one has to do is to carefully reflect upon the past decade and note everything that actually *has* gone wrong: how Iran was able to progress from having several hundred centrifuges to 19,000 of these machines, and to accumulate a stockpile of LEU in an amount that if enriched to higher levels could produce fissile material for 6 or 7 nuclear devices. Iran achieved these gains by manipulating and abusing the ambiguity that is ingrained in the NPT, while leveraging the apparent difficulty for international actors to act in a timely and coordinated manner to confront an emerging proliferation challenge. Unfortunately, there is enough wriggle room within the confines of the NPT for a state like Iran to create a dangerous breakout capability.

Specifically, anyone hoping to base the solution of this crisis – in the context of a comprehensive deal – on the idea that decisive action will be taken by the international community in the wake of “clear evidence” of an Iranian violation, should perhaps take a closer look at what has transpired

over the past ten years. Defining “clear evidence” is not a simple short step before resolution, but is rather the point where serious problems begin. What is “clear evidence?” Who decides, and who has to agree with the decision in order for action to be taken? The truth is that there are no objective criteria that have been set for making this call – in the NPT or any other format. Instead, everything turns on *interpretation of the evidence*; and interpretations are very much a reflection of state interests and international politics.

Therefore, securing great power consensus that a violation has occurred is a very shaky business, as has been underscored time and again by events over the past decade. This is why, for example, the four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions that were imposed on Iran from 2006 to 2010 were very slow in coming; and when each decision was finally taken, the measures themselves were a watered-down version that reflected compromises among the permanent members. The end result was sanctions that ended up being largely ineffective. Russia and China in particular consistently disputed the evidence upon which other states based their assessments, and international politics in the Security Council dictated that an agreement could be reached only at the lowest common denominator. It was only when the US, EU, and some other states decided to impose strong sanctions outside the UN framework that the necessary leverage for initiating the current round of negotiations was secured.

## **Essential Principles and Guidelines for Reaching a Comprehensive Deal**

In light of the above, beyond the issue of the particular aspects of Iran’s nuclear program that must be dealt with in the context of a comprehensive deal, there are certain principles and guidelines that must be followed in order to improve the international negotiators’ ability to get the best possible deal.

The first of these principles is to end the charade whereby Iran continues to claim that it has an “inalienable right” – per Article IV of the NPT – to work on any and all aspects of a civilian nuclear program because no proof of Iranian wrongdoing has been presented. In order to undercut Iran’s consistent refrain in this regard, the country must be brought face to face with its military nuclear program. Iran must be confronted with the full evidence of the “possible military dimensions” (PMD) of its program, and the P5+1 must demand immediate access and answers. The PMD are those elements of Iran’s nuclear program that cannot be explained away

as supporting civilian purposes, such as designs for creating a warhead or experiments with neutron detonators.

The reason that it is essential to clarify that Iran has been working on a military nuclear program for decades is thus not to humiliate Iran or “bring it to its knees.” Rather, this is imperative in order for the comprehensive deal to have a chance of fulfilling its original mandate: namely, eliciting a necessary Iranian strategic U-turn in the nuclear realm. How can the international negotiators effectively demand that Iran back away from its military ambitions when Iran says that it has none, and is not confronted with the evidence that it has? An adequate final deal cannot be reached if Iran is allowed to continue to insist upon its rights according to the NPT, on the grounds that no evidence has been produced that it committed a violation.

Some argue that if Iran is not forced to concede that it has been engaged in wrongdoing for years, this will actually make it easier for Iran to back down from the military direction without losing face. But these analysts are ignoring Iranian statements that continue to steadfastly advocate their “rights.” For example, head of Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, was quoted in April 2014 claiming that Iran had the “right” to enrich uranium even to weapons grade levels (90 percent) according to the NPT, and that it will not relinquish this right.

A second guideline for reaching a comprehensive deal has to do with understanding that Iran does not want to be in a position where it will have to blatantly violate the terms of the deal, should it decide to move to nuclear weapons. Iran much prefers to abuse ambiguous language than to set itself up for being easily caught in a violation. Therefore, it is critical that the terms of any comprehensive deal are formulated in a manner that reduces ambiguity – and subsequent problematic interpretations – to an absolute minimum. The international community cannot count on Iran to act in good faith or in the spirit of an agreement. Iran will follow the deal to the letter, and if provided maneuvering room, Iran will use it to its best advantage. This seems to be what happened regarding the reference to advanced centrifuge research and development (R&D) in the interim deal. The P5+1 did not mean for Iran to be able to work on increasingly advanced generations of centrifuges. However, it used language in the interim deal that was not specific enough, and therefore failed to prohibit Iran from doing so. From Iran’s point of view, the door remained wide open for Iran to advance whatever R&D aspect it desired, short of operation.



A third guideline refers to the question of verification and violations. Generally speaking, as noted above, it is very dangerous to hinge a comprehensive agreement on successful verification. There are simply too many things that can go wrong in this regard. Verification should be treated as a back-up mechanism to ensure compliance, but not as a replacement for an expectation that Iran will uphold the agreement. Moreover, when the P5+1 say: “if there is ‘clear evidence’ of an Iranian violation, we will proceed to...” this violation must be very clearly defined, not only vis-à-vis Iran, but in a manner that creates clear benchmarks for the relevant international actors, so that they have the best possible chance of arriving quickly at a common basis for making this assessment.

A fourth and final guideline regards the importance of not only maintaining, but effectively employing international leverage in the negotiations process. The success of this process critically hinges on the maintenance of strong leverage, because Iran will not agree to the deal that the international community is seeking unless it feels it has no choice. Therefore, the P5+1 must continue to hold onto the sanctions leverage throughout the process in order to get where they want to go. Early in 2014, the White House acted decisively to stop Congress from passing new sanctions legislation, but remained quite complacent in the face of evidence that Iran is selling more barrels of oil per day than permitted under the terms of the interim deal. Projecting determination in this negotiation is critical. Unfortunately, more often than not, when the United States tries to act reasonably toward Iran – for example, by not reacting to horrific rhetoric issued by the Supreme Leader – this is chalked up as weakness to be exploited at the bargaining table, and not as positive goodwill to be reciprocated by Iran.

## **Conclusion**

Rather than defining and setting forth the specific nuclear issues that need to be covered in a comprehensive deal with Iran – which is done elsewhere in this volume – this piece lays out some of the principles for getting a better deal. The hour is very late, and the chances for a good comprehensive deal are unfortunately looking rather dim. Nevertheless, as the parties move toward that goal, these ideas are offered as critical guidelines for avoiding some of the problems and pitfalls with which the international community has been grappling in its ongoing efforts to prevent Iran from achieving a military nuclear capability.



# Iran's Progress to the Bomb: Changes since the Interim Deal

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Ephraim Asculai

How close is Iran to the bomb and what has changed since the interim deal (formally: the Joint Plan of Action – JPA) was signed? The answers to both questions are seemingly simple: according to reliable sources in Israel, Iran is a decision away, plus three to six months for achieving the capability to detonate a nuclear device.<sup>1</sup> Changes to the technical assessment since the interim deal was concluded are minor. Nonetheless, one may assume that since the interim deal was signed in November 2013, Iran has moved farther away from making such a decision, at least as long as no extraordinary events occur that would accelerate such a decision.

Although Iran has a civilian nuclear program for energy production and industrial and medical uses, there is no doubt that it is developing a parallel program designed to attain military nuclear capabilities to be realized if and when the leadership decides to produce nuclear weapons. This essay surveys Iran's potential in the military nuclear realm, the possible motives for deciding to produce a nuclear device, and the effect of the interim deal on both Iran's technical potential and its drive to produce a nuclear weapon.

## **Iran's Technical Potential**

### ***Fissile Material***

In its first phase, Iran's military nuclear program is based on the use of uranium isotope 235, found in nature at a concentration of 0.7 percent and enriched to a military grade of 90 percent, at which point it can serve as the fissile material, i.e., the nuclear material in the core of the nuclear explosive

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Dr. Ephraim Asculai, who worked at the Israel Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) for over forty years, is a senior research fellow at INSS.

device. At a later stage, and after completing the construction of a heavy water and natural uranium reactor in Arak, the Iranian program will also include the use of plutonium as fissile material. Since this second track is farther from completion, the essay surveys the uranium track more extensively.

As much as is known, Iran has three uranium enrichment facilities: a large installation in Natanz, a smaller installation in Fordow, and an experimental installation (also in Natanz).<sup>2</sup> At present, the enrichment process is executed by means of gas centrifuges based on an early Pakistani model. Some 9,000 centrifuges of this design are installed in various facilities and are spinning to enrich uranium. As of February 2014, Iran had enriched a significant amount of uranium to a 3.5 percent level, sufficient, if enriched to weapons grade, for making six to eight nuclear bombs, as well an additional amount enriched to a 20 percent level sufficient for one nuclear bomb, if enriched to weapons grade.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Explosive Device*

There are hints and bits of evidence, including in reports issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency, of Iran working on the development of the explosive mechanism, without which no nuclear explosion is possible. Iran continues to refuse to answer the full range of questions in this regard, instead accusing the world of deception and forgery of the documents discovered. As in the case of Libya, Iran presumably acquired the design of the explosive mechanism from Pakistan, fundamentally a Chinese design tested successfully several times. The work with uranium allows Iran to test the operation of the explosive mechanism using natural uranium, a perfect simulator for the final mechanism, unlike plutonium, which represents a thornier problem for developers. Even if Iran did not obtain the design from Pakistan, there is clear evidence that it worked on the development of the mechanism over a decade ago. Considering Iran's technical capabilities, one cannot assume that Iran does not have a proven design (without fissile material) for a nuclear explosive mechanism. Such a mechanism is sufficient for carrying out a nuclear test or a delivery at any target using primitive means ("a bomb in a container"), not as part of a military arsenal of nuclear weapons for which more development is needed.

## **The Breakout Methodology**

### ***The Mission***

Iran's primary task on the road to the construction of a nuclear explosive device is enriching enough uranium to a 90 percent level. Iran will likely only build a bomb if the leadership makes an explicit decision to do so while strictly adhering to the following: secrecy, to the extent possible; maximal speed of execution; acquisition of the other parts of the nuclear program, like the explosive mechanism; a ready means of delivery (should this be the goal of the breakout); and/or preparation of the nuclear test site. Unless these components are in place, it is hard to assume Iran will break out only for the sake of stockpiling fissile material and run the risk of seriously jeopardizing its nuclear ambitions.

Given that Iran has a significant amount of uranium already enriched to 3.5 percent, which constitutes most of the work required for enrichment to 90 percent, further enrichment to this level will not be necessary at the time of breakout. Thus, all enrichment resources can be freed for enrichment to higher levels. Iran has also enriched a certain amount of uranium to 20 percent; this can, without much work, be turned into material enriched to 90 percent. The same centrifuges are used to enrich uranium to weapons grade, though certain changes in the cascading structure (the connections between the centrifuges allowing efficient enrichment) must be made; this is discussed below.

Because Iran's enrichment facilities have many centrifuges – more than those enriching uranium at the beginning of 2014, and include centrifuges of an advanced design that have not yet been used for uranium enrichment – one may assume that the Iranians will use all the potential at their disposal for breakout and rapid uranium enrichment to military grade.

### ***Breakout Time***

After the upper echelons in Iran have issued the orders for breakout, the stages are as follows: enriching uranium to weapons grade; turning the enriched gas into metal; casting the metal; machining the metal into the shape of the final core; and integrating the core with the explosive mechanism. The main factor that will determine the time it will take to complete the breakout is the concentration of initial uranium 235. If Iran starts from natural concentration, the enrichment process will require much more time

than if it starts enrichment from even 3.5 percent. There are different time estimates in the literature for a breakout, varying from a few weeks to one year.<sup>4</sup> If the breakout starts from existing 3.5 percent enriched stockpiles and uses the entire enrichment system known to exist in Iranian facilities, this process would take two to three months. The other stages – making the core and integrating it with the explosive mechanism – would take one to three months, dependent on Iranian readiness. Thus, from the moment the decision is made, breakout time can be grossly estimated at three to six months.

### **The Effect of the Agreements on Iran's Technical Timetable**

The agreements that may affect Iran's potential to break out and make an explosive nuclear device and the particular timetable for that operation, from the start of breakout activity to the completion of the first nuclear device, are the Joint Plan of Action concluded on November 24, 2013 (which went into effect on January 20, 2014) and the document called the Summary, which interprets the JPA.<sup>5</sup> There are three types of agreements relevant to the matter at hand: agreements that may affect the rate of breakout in the immediate future; agreements that may affect timetables in the long run; and agreements that have no concrete effect on Iran's nuclear plans. This latter category includes the gamut of agreements and understandings between Iran and the IAEA, because the IAEA has very limited powers of supervision. As long as the supervision terms are not significantly expanded, there is no meaningful way to follow up on the Iranian nuclear program, as much of it can be done clandestinely. For the first two categories, paragraphs of the Summary are studied against the real effect on the nuclear program in Iran; for the third category, only general features are noted.<sup>6</sup>

#### ***Category A: Direct Impact on Breakout Speed***

The only paragraphs with direct impact on the speed of breakout are those discussing uranium enrichment up to 20 percent. Iran has some 400 kg of 20 percent enriched uranium (in the form of uranium hexafluoride, a gas compound). Should it be enriched to weapons grade, this is enough material for at least one explosive core. Iran has moved about half of this quantity to a facility manufacturing nuclear fuel, because this level of enrichment is suitable for use in the Tehran Research Reactor, and converted some of the quantity into uranium oxide. Although the original agreement said

something slightly different, the Summary document states the following about the uranium enriched to 20 percent: uranium enrichment to 20 percent will cease; half of this amount of uranium, in the form of the gas compound, will be diluted to a level of 3.5 percent or less; the process of turning the rest of the material into uranium oxide will continue, as, according to the document, it is unusable for further enrichment. In addition, the centrifuge facilities that served the 20 percent enrichment process will be dismantled.<sup>7</sup>

The only significant part of these decisions is the dilution of about one-quarter of the amount enriched to 20 percent and its restoration to a lower enrichment level. In other words, Iran is left with a hefty amount of uranium enriched to 20 percent, even if it is in the form of uranium oxide.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the statement on the latter material's lack of usability is incorrect and misleading.<sup>9</sup> True, turning it back into a gas needed for enrichment requires certain chemical processes, but these are definitely possible and are known to the Iranians. The effort, especially if all the preparations have been made, is not all that difficult.

Therefore, as long as Iran has a significant amount of uranium gas enriched to 20 percent, it can, almost immediately, start enriching to 90 percent, after the appropriate adjustments are made to the existing cascades. If this happens, the delay to the nuclear program as a whole will be negligible, because Iran will enrich to 20 percent at the same time that it enriches the existing stockpile to military grade. The dismantling of the special facilities mentioned for enriching to 20 percent is not very important, because these served only to increase the rate of enrichment somewhat. Iran will still be able to use existing facilities to that end.

In other words, if at the outset Iran does not have a usable amount of gas enriched to 20 percent, the Iranian breakout will be postponed by about one month.

### ***Category B: Impact on the Longer Term of the Nuclear Program***

The details of the agreement include: prohibition on expanding enrichment capabilities to the 3.5 percent level; determination at a later date of the amount of uranium enriched to this level to be left in Iran at the end of the agreement period; restrictions on enrichment R&D; restrictions on continuing construction of the Arak reactor; and the prohibition on establishment of a reprocessing facility for spent fuel in Arak.

Keeping enrichment capabilities to their current limit entails several secondary restrictions: not operating centrifuges that have not yet been in operation, including not operating advanced models of centrifuges; not constructing new enrichment facilities; restrictions on R&D of centrifuges not yet launched; and the production of centrifuges only if needed as replacement for broken centrifuges. Thus, Iran can continue to produce uranium enriched to 3.5 percent at the current pace. The JPA mentioned turning this material into an (allegedly unusable) oxide form, but as far as is known, this has yet to be implemented.

### ***Category C: Agreements with No Direct Bearing on Iran's Breakout Capabilities***

In general terms, this category includes IAEA supervision and international inspection of the agreement's execution designed to provide timely warnings if and when Iran decides not to uphold some or all of the agreements. But there are two important aspects of supervision that the agreements fail to touch upon: supervision of the military parts of Iran's nuclear program and the search for facilities, materials, and activities Iran has failed to disclose. Should this lapse not be addressed in the final agreement, the Iranians will, if they choose, be able to undertake concurrent nuclear activities liable to provide them with military nuclear capabilities without a reasonable early warning system.<sup>10</sup>

### **Iran's Political Decisions**

Negotiations over the final agreement among the partners to the interim deal – Iran and the P5+1 – began in early 2014. The negotiating period was set to last six months, with an option for extension. The key question is: can the participants drag the talks out indefinitely, and if they can't, what will cause the change and where will change lead? The state of equilibrium will be disrupted in one of the following general scenarios: from Iran's perspective, if the Iranian economy disintegrates, in which case the domestic reality in the country will require a change in the status quo, or if there is a real military and/or political threat against it; from the other parties' perspective, if Iran violates the interim deal, undeclared nuclear facilities are discovered, and/or the military pieces of Iran's military nuclear program are exposed.

On the eve of July 20, 2014, and as the parties agreed to extend the negotiations, the objectives of the sides remained what they had been at the



outset: from the perspective of the major powers, the purpose of the final agreement is to remove the possibility of a quick Iranian nuclear breakout; for its part, Iran is still intent on preserving all of its current capabilities and developing them further. Is there a meeting point among these respective independent goals? From Iran's perspective, a gradual lifting of sanctions to a bearable level would maintain an equilibrium – perhaps not entirely stable, but one that isn't limited by a clear deadline. Iran is also interested in buying time, because the window of opportunity for breaking out – making an explosive nuclear device – narrows with each passing day.<sup>11</sup> For their part, the world powers are also not interested in exacerbating the situation, because although they have not drawn any red lines, the situation could deteriorate to the point where they would have to respond with greater severity to the possibility that Iran is arming itself with a nuclear bomb. Should the Iranians feel threatened, they are liable to make the decision to break out and carry out a nuclear test at the earliest possible opportunity. Based on the precedents of India, Pakistan, and North Korea, this could lead to a situation that would be the most stable for Iran. There is hardly any doubt that if Iran is militarily attacked or if it suffers significant damage because of some hostile action, it will try to break out and prove its nuclear capabilities.

All of the above is based on the assumption that the stated policy of not permitting Iran to produce nuclear weapons (proclaimed notably by the United States) is in fact implemented, thereby rendering the question of containing Iran redundant. However, the United States never really declared that containing *the capability* to manufacture nuclear weapons is out of the question, because it is already in existence.<sup>12</sup> Such a situation, should it be agreed upon with Iran, will create stability, but will also be a source for increasing anxiety on the part of the region's countries, especially the Gulf states and Israel.

### **The Limitations of the Agreements**

The agreements refer to acknowledged facilities, their capabilities, and the stocks of known nuclear materials. However, what if Iran has undeclared facilities, activities and materials about which we know nothing? If that is the case, all timetable assessments are incomplete, because despite boasts by US intelligence services that they can discover any fallacy, the possibility of failure is not negligible.<sup>13</sup> History shows that the past is full of intelligence failures, even in the United States, and that one cannot place absolute trust

in the timely warning abilities of any intelligence system. All of the above also assumes that Iran will not make the decision to break out and prove its capabilities for the sake of prestige or to attain regional hegemony, but those options cannot be ruled out either. The decision making processes in Iran may be technically known, but the rationale behind them is not always crystal clear, and motivations for decisions may not be understandable to the Western mind examining them.

One must not assume that the Iranians, if they make the breakout decision and use the declared materials and facilities, will succeed in hiding the breakout activities and producing the first nuclear bomb for any length of time. But based on past experience it is reasonable to assume that the world's response will be so slow and ineffectual as to be virtually useless, especially when one looks at the North Korean case study and earlier incidents concerning India and Pakistan. It would be very different were Iran to use hidden facilities to make nuclear weapons. In such a case, the world could wake up one morning to discover that Iran has already carried out a successful underground nuclear test.

In conclusion, Iran can take the breakout decision anytime now, and three to six months are needed for producing a nuclear explosive device; the interim deals have, in the best case scenario, delayed the breakout time, for technical reasons, by one month at the most, and further postponed a final reckoning as long as the final agreement negotiations meander along to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

## Notes

- 1 Based on a speech made by Defense Minister Yaalon at the INSS annual conference "Security Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," January 29, 2014.
- 2 Given that the entire history of the Iranian nuclear project is replete with instances of subterfuge and concealment, it is impossible to rule out the existence of facilities about which we know nothing. See report by the IAEA from February 20, 2014, <http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/iaea-iranreport-02202014.pdf>.
- 3 See the analysis by ISIS of the IAEA report in David Albright, Christina Walrond, and Andrea Stricker, "ISIS Analysis of IAEA Iran Safeguards Report," February 20, 2014; [http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/ISIS\\_Analysis\\_IAEA\\_Safeguards\\_Report\\_20February2014-Final.pdf](http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/ISIS_Analysis_IAEA_Safeguards_Report_20February2014-Final.pdf).
- 4 Patrick Migliorini, David Albright, Houston Wood, and Christina Walrond, "Iranian Breakout Estimates, Updated September 2013," ISIS Report, October 24, 2013, [http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Breakout\\_Study\\_24October2013.pdf](http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Breakout_Study_24October2013.pdf).

- 5 “Joint Plan of Action,” Geneva, November 24, 2013. See also “Summary of Technical Understandings Related to the Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action on the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Nuclear Program,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, January 16, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/16/summary-technical-understandings-related-implementation-joint-plan-action>. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/24/iran-nuclear-deal-joint-plan-action>.
- 6 The Summary does not include all the paragraphs of the agreement. Some remain classified for unclear – and worrisome – reasons.
- 7 Although there is no difference between centrifuges that enrich to a low level and those that enrich to a high level, the structure of the cascades – the number of centrifuges in each cascade and the pipes connecting one centrifuge to another – may differ for different levels of enrichment; these pipes must be rearranged.
- 8 The statement that many accept and cite – that Iran does not have a significant amount of uranium enriched to 20 percent – is both wrong and misleading. See Paragraph 4 in the main findings of the report, David Albright, Paulina Izewicz, Andrea Stricker, and Serena Kelleher-Vergantini, “ISIS Analysis of IAEA Iran Safeguards Report,” May 23, 2014, [http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/ISIS\\_Analysis\\_IAEA\\_Safeguards\\_Report\\_23May2014-finaldoc.pdf](http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/ISIS_Analysis_IAEA_Safeguards_Report_23May2014-finaldoc.pdf).
- 9 “Conversion and Deconversion,” World Nuclear Association, September 2013, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Nuclear-Fuel-Cycle/Conversion-Enrichment-and-Fabrication/Conversion-and-Deconversion/>.
- 10 Emily B. Landau, Ephraim Asculai, and Shimon Stein, “Atomic Amnesia: The Forgotten Military Aspects of Iran’s Nuclear Program,” *National Interest*, June 3, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/atomic-amnesia-the-forgotten-military-aspects-iran%E2%80%99s-nuclear-10585>.
- 11 William C. Witt, Christina Walrond, David Albright, and Houston Wood, “Iran’s Evolving Breakout Potential,” ISIS Report, October 8, 2012; [http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Irans\\_Evolving\\_Breakout\\_Potential.pdf](http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Irans_Evolving_Breakout_Potential.pdf).
- 12 Nick Simeone, “DoD Official: U.S. Will Not Allow Iran to Acquire Nuclear Weapon,” American Forces Press Service, February 11, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121643>.
- 13 Senate Statement by James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, January 29, 2014. <http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/140129/clapper.pdf>.



## A Nuclear Deal with Iran and the Perils of Sanctions Relief

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Emanuele Ottolenghi

Western negotiators routinely explain that the purpose of the sanctions regime against Iran is to increase negotiating leverage against the Islamic Republic. Economic pressure, they reason, will force Iran into a suitable compromise at the negotiating table, and relief would accompany any final agreement. If a final agreement is ultimately signed, the sanctions relief architecture must be carefully crafted to ensure that Iranian attempts to procure dual-use technology and raw materials vital to a military program are met with the same stringent measure and vigilance now in place.

The regime's nuclear program unquestionably threatens international peace and security. The international community knows that if left unchecked, Iran's declared facilities and inventoried stockpile of nuclear materials would be enough for a straight and swift path to a nuclear bomb. But the current extent of Tehran's efforts is unclear. Western intelligence agencies are still learning what other investments the regime has made to support its nuclear program.

Iran's history of nuclear deception demands additional caution for the final stretch of nuclear negotiations. It also requires keeping Western leverage intact until full Iranian compliance is verified beyond any reasonable doubt. After all, twice since 2002, Iran was exposed as having massive nuclear facilities that Tehran had failed to report to the International Atomic Energy Agency. The existence of additional undisclosed facilities cannot be ruled out, nor can the possibility that Iran may seek to develop new sites in the future.

Iran is already benefiting from cracks in the sanctions regime. Though Western negotiators claim that economic concessions to Iran under the

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Dr. Emanuele Ottolenghi is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

interim deal are both minor and fully reversible, there is ample evidence to suggest a more complicated picture. Iran's charm offensive, led by its new President, Hassan Rouhani, and his worldly Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, has created high hopes among global business leaders that Iran will soon again open its doors for profitable deals. Bolstering this perception is central to Rouhani's foreign policy strategy of changing the market psychology on sanctions – from a climate of fear that discourages even legitimate, unsanctioned business, to a climate of hope where business booms in anticipation of sanctions being lifted.

To elicit and strengthen this mood, Iran has unleashed its proxies in Europe and Asia to promote business visits to Iran, which have increasingly been reciprocated by Iranian visits abroad. Rouhani's appearance at Davos and an aggressive courtship of oil companies by his new oil minister, Bijan Zangeneh, have dovetailed nicely with the hopeful mood sustained by Western diplomats keen on lending a positive spin to the interim deal as well as the chances of a final diplomatic deal regarding Iran's nuclear program.

Particularly in Europe and Asia, the business community only grudgingly and reluctantly yielded to sanctions pressure late in 2010. Thus, their memories of business opportunities in Iran are still fresh; their partners in Iran still answer their calls; and the newly found atmosphere created by diplomatic negotiations encourages them to explore the possibilities of reopening lines of credit and reestablishing a foothold in Tehran. The lack of new sanctions and the partial freeze of existing ones strengthen their sense that with an impending deal, now is the time for companies to position themselves favorably with their Iranian counterparts so that business deals can be signed as soon as the veil of sanctions is lifted.

What is the problem with this approach? While one branch of the Iranian regime nods benignly at the business community offering assurances of openness and transparency, another branch plots how to exploit a newly relaxed trade environment to obtain the missing pieces of Iran's clandestine nuclear program. Indeed, Iran's entire power structure, as if in a nod to its Zoroastrian past, is based on dualism – two executive heads of state, one elected and one clerical; two judiciaries, one religious and one not; two armies, one regular and one revolutionary; and so on. So too is the nuclear program, part of which is declared and overt, while part has been kept concealed from the international community.

Understanding the history of Iran's procurement is critical, therefore, as the West prepares to offer additional sanctions relief in exchange for meaningful limitations on Iran's declared nuclear facilities, an intrusive inspection regime, and a cap on declared nuclear activities. Having a full accounting of Iran's clandestine procurement activities is important for uncovering potential undeclared nuclear facilities. It is also vital for those engaged in designing the pace and scope of sanctions relief to minimize the risk that Iran will be able to subvert its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Iranian system and nuclear program is unlike any the world has ever confronted. Foreign powers are reduced to acting nearly on intelligence alone to discern where decisions are made and how priorities are set. Internal conflict means that not all Iranian actions are necessarily directed by the regime's leadership. Certain activity, however, is clearly determined at the highest levels. This includes efforts to circumvent sanctions and develop procurement networks.

Economic diplomacy, designed to weigh heavily on Iran's economy, has been the preferred tool of US and European powers to empower nuclear negotiators focused on containing and constraining Iran's declared nuclear activities. But Iran has managed to challenge the sanctions regime legally – and successfully. It has moved funds around the world, shipped sensitive technology and raw materials, found alternative ways of payment, and copied engineering marvels it could not import. Iran has exploited the EU legal system to mount court challenges against designations of Iranian entities. Once Iran called into question the legal grounds for designations and protested that the EU has based punitive measures on flimsy evidence, EU lawyers have balked at requirements to show evidence to both the court and Iran's lawyers. Revealing this sensitive material could jeopardize intelligence sources working with EU member states, so the EU has thus gone empty-handed to its judicial summons.

Predictably, the rulings have gone Iran's way and started the erosion of the once strong EU sanctions architecture. The Joint Plan of Action, the interim deal signed in Geneva in November 2013, bars the EU from passing new sanctions. Therefore, the EU cannot slap sector bans on entire areas of Iran's economy. Entities could be relisted, but only for a time. Winning in court is part of Iran's strategy to loosen sanctions – and it is a sure winner

for whichever designation might remain on the books once a final nuclear accord is reached.

Key to continued court victories is the ability to obtain material or expertise that would be of use in furthering a clandestine nuclear program without attracting attention, and Iran has demonstrated a high level of ingenuity in developing its networks. In 2002, Iranian emissaries approached MCS International GmbH, a German producer of cylinders for hybrid cars, to buy a flow-forming machine. They succeeded in negotiating a purchase agreement, but before they could transfer the delicate equipment – which is used to rotate carbon fiber and other elements into cylindrical shapes, but can also produce centrifuges – the factory was caught in the hostile takeover of its erstwhile owner. In the process, MCS, at the time named Mannesmann Cylinder Systems, fell into bankruptcy. By the time its finances were settled, German authorities had caught up with the flow-forming machine and blocked its transfer to Iran.

Iran, however, did not relent. Iranian emissaries working for state-owned automotive industry companies established a new company, MCS International GmbH, and bought the factory with its machines. For the next 12 years, MCS International continued to operate under Iranian ownership – and eventually it became a subsidiary of a financial holding controlled by Iran's Supreme Leader. Though neither its machinery nor its carbon fiber could be transferred to Iran, its owners ensured periodic visits by delegations of Iranian engineers, who familiarized themselves with the technology on site. Eventually, a twin factory was built in Iran, at which point MCS International was left to go bankrupt.

The case of MCS International reveals two important aspects of Iranian procurement. The first is that Iranian emissaries have been scouting the global economy in search of distressed assets – factories and businesses in desperate need for cash injections. Robust purchases sometimes do the trick. Otherwise, the offer to buy a business, or at least a share of it, enables Iran to access technology that is hard to come by otherwise. Ownership enables heightened flexibility in arranging business deals with front companies that Iran operates elsewhere. Supplies of technology stream steadily as a result.

The second lesson has to do with how Iran covers its own tracks – and in the process, manages to build convoluted but effective routes for its illicit procurement efforts. Even as Iranian control over the German factory was revealed, European authorities were unable to block shipments of goods



under the somewhat spurious notion that the end-user listed on sales was not in Iran, but in Dubai. Such matter highlights another weak point in the sanctions architecture, which Iran has exploited to circumvent both shipping and payment restrictions.

Most procurement efforts no longer go directly from the supply source to Iran. Iran has devised a complex web of intermediaries and middle points through which both shipments and payments can move without raising suspicion. Turkey, Dubai, Malaysia, and the Caucasus continue to feature prominently in these schemes, whereby locally incorporated businesses act as end-users, proceeding to fictitiously resell and reship prized dual use merchandise to Iran. Local banks are used for payments when possible. Otherwise, elaborate barter systems are utilized to ensure payments.

In the months since the JPOA was signed, there are no signs that such efforts are abating. After all, it is evident from the paucity of designations by the US Department of Treasury of Iranian entities since November 2013, and the total absence of new designations by Europe, that the West is reluctant to take action against Iranian proliferators. Western diplomats admit that though technically legal, new designations under existing sanctions are impolitic while negotiations continue. If anything, one must assume that a relaxed sanctions regime will involve less willingness, for practical as well as political reasons, to slap Iran on its wrist for violations if an agreement is reached.

Negotiators must make sanctions relief work without compromising Western ability to police Iranian procurement efforts and punish its regime for possible future misbehavior.

Iran's long experience in the art of procurement offers a cautionary tale. And it invites the question: can we ensure that, as sanctions are phased out, there will be no opening for Iran's temptation to complete its inventory on the path to nuclear weapons capability?



# A New Middle East: Thoughts on a Deterrence Regime against a Nuclear Iran

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Avner Golov

Israel's primary concern regarding the interim deal signed between the world powers and Iran is that it has damaged the international sanctions against the Iranian oil industry and economy, and as such, has undermined the main leverage vis-à-vis Tehran. In fact, this agreement impedes its original goal: to enable negotiations on a final agreement that will dismantle key elements of the Iranian nuclear program. Therefore, if it is extended or if it leads to a "bad deal" that allows Iran to advance its capabilities under the cover of an international agreement, it could ultimately enable Iran to produce nuclear weapons at a time of its choosing.

## **A Nuclear Iran: An Intellectual Challenge**

Imagine how the Middle East would look if Iran in fact succeeded in achieving a military nuclear capability. This challenge, which has preoccupied many researchers and analysts alike, is usually addressed in the framework of traditional concepts that developed during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, the ability of this traditional world of concepts to describe the reality of a nuclear Iran is limited, first of all due to the assumption that deterrence regimes exist primarily between two main actors: the defending party, which seeks to deter, and the attacking party, which serves as a target for attempts at deterrence. This assumption does not suit the reality of a Middle East with a nuclear Iran. Even today, the Iranians view the United States as a major player in the Middle East, and certainly in the Iran-Israel dynamic. It is likely that in the event of a conflict, Iran's

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Avner Golov, a research associate at INSS, is a doctoral student at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

considerations would be greatly influenced by US policy and American threats, which would seek to deter an Iranian attack on Israel. Israel could also be expected to relay deterrent messages to Tehran in order to prevent a direct Iranian strike, or a strike by one or more of the terrorist organizations on Israel's borders that are supported by Iran – Hizbollah in Lebanon or Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations in Gaza and Sinai. This scenario actually involves a deterrence system with three different countries presumably endowed with nuclear capabilities. The offensive capabilities of terrorist organizations will also be part of this system.

It can be argued that this scenario would be a classic situation of “extended deterrence,” in which a world power seeks to defend its ally by deterring its enemy from attacking the ally. In this type of deterrence regime, the “main game” is between the world power and the attacking party, and the third party – which the defending party seeks to protect – plays a marginal role. But theory, though all very well and good, does not necessarily match reality. The independent capabilities attributed to Israel, which are no less than those of Iran, can be expected to create a situation in which the central dynamics play out simultaneously in attempts at extended American deterrence and in bilateral deterrence between Israel and Iran. Furthermore, Israeli policy will not necessarily be coordinated on a high level with US policy. A lack of full coordination and suspicion during times of crisis characterized the relationship between Washington and Jerusalem during the war in Lebanon against Hizbollah in the 1980s and in the 1991 Gulf War against Saddam Hussein. The relations today evince similar distances in the context of the international campaign against the Iranian military nuclear program. In the event of a conflict with a nuclear Iran, a combination of two simultaneous but independent deterrence regimes would likely surface. Such a scenario would make the strategic situation more complicated than a situation of extended deterrence.

Moreover, if Iran achieved nuclear capability, the situation in the region would exceed the model of extended deterrence. Over the past year President Obama has repeatedly warned that nuclear weapons in Tehran's hands could create an incentive for other countries in the region to develop military nuclear capabilities. The Saudis have stated publicly that if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, they will be forced to obtain similar capabilities. According to Dennis Ross, President Obama's former advisor on Iran, the Saudis have conveyed the same message in closed talks with US representatives.<sup>1</sup> Since

Saudi Arabia has a close connection with the regime in Pakistan and a nascent nuclear infrastructure, the main risk is that it will purchase Pakistani nuclear weapons or that it will be covered by the Pakistani nuclear umbrella, and within a short time the Middle East will become a region that has three countries believed to possess nuclear capabilities. In this scenario, there will be simultaneous deterrence regimes between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel, and Iran and Israel. Joining this would be the impact of US deterrence policy during a crisis. This dynamic is complicated, and the traditional bilateral analysis, including use of the extended deterrence model, is not sufficient to explain it. There are both threats and opportunities inherent in this multilateral deterrence regime, which have not yet been discussed in depth.

### **A Nuclear Iran: Threats and Opportunities**

In classic deterrence, the main challenge for the defending party is to convey a clear and consistent message to the attacking party about the forbidden action and the price for carrying it out. In multilateral deterrence, on the other hand, the challenge for the defending party is to convey this message simultaneously to a number of countries with different, and sometimes contradictory, world views and interests. This is particularly important because any message will be examined by the other actors in the arena. Any Saudi statement, for example, will be interpreted at the same time in Washington, Tehran, and Jerusalem, although not necessarily in the same way. Each party will seek to threaten with the intention of deterring the other three parties, but without causing them an excess of insecurity, which is liable to push them into a preemptive strike in order to damage the enemy's capabilities. Thus, for example, a conciliatory message from one country could be interpreted by a second country as weakness or by a third country as manipulation intended to camouflage a plan to attack. As a result of crossed wires and mixed signals, the risk of escalation will increase, even though none of the parties is interested in escalation.

This challenge becomes more complicated in the Middle East, where there is poor communication between states, and especially between Israel and Iran, which do not have diplomatic relations. In a nuclear Middle East, the lack of direct and effective channels of communication between countries could encourage them to receive mistaken assessments of enemy

intentions, read the situation incorrectly, and attack the enemy out of fear that the enemy will attack first.

Another problem is connected to the relativity of the threat. In the bilateral model of deterrence, the credibility of the defending party's deterrent messages depends on its ability to cause intolerable damage to the attacking party. In multilateral deterrence regimes, however, the threat is not absolute, but is measured against the other threats in the arena. Tehran would compare the Israeli threat with the Saudi threat and the American threat. This equation could have a decisive impact, for example, in the event of a conventional conflict between the United States and Iran. The challenge for Israel would be to present a threat of significant damage, in addition to the damage that could be inflicted by the impressive US military capabilities, in order to influence the decisions in Tehran and prevent it from dragging Israel into the conflict. Saudi Arabia could encounter a similar challenge in the event of a conflict between Iran and Israel.

Along with threats that undermine strategic stability, this complex environment could provide a number of opportunities that, if used correctly, would make it possible to reduce the instability somewhat. The different countries' fear of a common enemy could encourage them to cooperate and increase their independent deterrence capability. Thus, for example, Israel and Saudi Arabia could cooperate against Iran, with each capitalizing on its respective advantages. Israel has a modern army and stronger and more precise firepower than Saudi Arabia, while Saudi Arabia has a geographic and political advantage in a military operation against Iran. If the two countries decided to join together, they could present a significant threat to Iran, greater than the threat that either could present by itself.

Another opportunity is to cooperate in developing "deterrence by denial," primarily active protection capabilities. In the context of deterrence, these capabilities are supposed to reduce the benefit to the attacking party and as such, to influence its considerations. It receives legitimacy and broad international support because it enables coping with threats using methods that are defensive and not offensive. Active protection capabilities are not only a deterrent tool; they also make it possible to address the threat and reduce the pressure on decision makers in formulating a response when deterrence fails. They can thus help keep escalation limited and controlled and prevent all-out war between nuclear states, which could be a regional disaster. The Arrow system, for instance, could be a critical restraining factor

in the event of escalation between Jerusalem and Tehran if Iran possesses nuclear weapons.

## **Conclusion**

To this day, there has been only a partial analysis of the equation of deterrence for a scenario in which Iran achieves nuclear capability. This is because a deterrence regime in a Middle East with a nuclear Iran does not completely suit the concepts of the Cold War, even in their widest sense. This conclusion emphasizes the need to be wary of the possibility of maintaining the stability of nuclear deterrence regimes in such an unstable environment. The large number of players makes the regime less stable compared to a bilateral regime, and the study of the phenomenon is still in its infancy. If the interim deal between Iran and the world powers leads to an agreement that prevents Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, then this discussion will remain theoretical. However, given President Obama's worrisome assessment that the chances for having this kind of agreement are 50 percent, there is a need for greater research on the strategic situation that a nuclear Iran would create in the region, and thus a need to establish the relevance of the existing deterrence literature for confronting this situation.

## **Note**

- 1 Chemi Shalev, "Dennis Ross: Saudi King Vowed to Obtain Nuclear Bomb after Iran," *Haaretz*, May 30, 2012.





## PART II

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### The Broader Context

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## Is Iran Indeed More Moderate?

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Meir Litvak

Iran's "charm offensive," launched when Hassan Rouhani took office as president in August 2013, sparks the question: has there been a qualitative change in Iran's policy toward greater moderation, or are we seeing a mere tactical maneuver meant to advance Iran's strategic goals on the nuclear issue and consolidate its position as a regional power? Rouhani spearheads the new approach, but in the Iranian political system the President is not the highest authority, rather one among the system's many loci of power competing to shape policy. After formulating a consensus among the political elites, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is the final arbiter; the President then executes the policy. Still, the institution of the presidency and the personality of the person in office bear weight in the policy shaping process, albeit difficult to quantify, as evidenced by changes in Iran's conduct under the different Presidents since Khamenei assumed his position in 1989. The Iranian arena is also characterized by deep rifts – ideological, institutional, and personal – between the rigid conservative hardliners and the more pragmatic camp. The conservatives experienced a setback when Rouhani was elected, but they control a host of power centers, first and foremost the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij militias, the parliament, the Guardian Council of the Constitution, the judiciary, and many economic institutions. Khamenei tends to the conservative side, but he maintains a strict divide-and-conquer policy and a balance between the sides to safeguard his own supremacy.

Rouhani is cut from the same cloth as the regime and is a member of Khamenei's inner circle. His public activity and statements during the two

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Prof. Meir Litvak is the Director of the Alliance Center for Iranian Studies and a faculty member in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University.

decades preceding his election as President show him to be mostly pragmatic, but nonetheless totally committed to the regime's interests and Iran's national goals. Therefore, it was unrealistic to expect that his election would result in quick or dramatic changes in Iran's policy. On the other hand, one cannot dismiss the changes that have already taken place in Iran, and certainly not the possibility that Rouhani's moves, regardless of their initial objectives, have created dynamics that can generate a more profound change in Iran's policy. Rouhani was elected thanks to his emphasis on "moderation" and "reason," in contrast to the extreme and polarizing approach of his predecessor in office, Mahmod Ahmadinejad, and, more importantly, thanks to his promise to rehabilitate Iran's economic and international position, which would necessarily require some compromise on the nuclear issue. In this sense, the election results were an unequivocal message by the Iranian public to its leadership: the two candidates who spoke about the need for greater openness to the world – Rouhani, and to a lesser extent Mohammad Bakar Ghalibaf, mayor of Tehran – together won some 67 percent of the vote (50.71 percent and 16.5 percent, respectively). By contrast, Saeed Jalili, who took the hardest line against the West and urged Iran to adopt an "economy of jihad," i.e., pay the heavy economic price to avoid any compromise with the West, won only 12 percent of the vote. In other words, the Iranian electorate made it clear that it was not prepared to suffer a starvation economy or siege despite its support for the regime when it came to "Iran's inalienable rights" to advance a nuclear program "for peaceful energy needs." Even an authoritarian regime such as Iran's cannot ignore so manifest a message in so sensitive an area as the economy, especially in light of the regional upheavals of the Arab Spring.

The political struggle in Iran hinges on several interrelated issues: when it comes to the country's nuclear program, what is the compromise or extent of concession to the world powers that can lift the sanctions crippling the economy? Would a nuclear compromise lead to a warmer relationship with the West, especially the United States? What is the desired connection between a more pragmatic foreign policy and the regime's domestic policy?

### **The Nuclear Issue**

From the Israeli perspective, the interim deal signed with Iran in November 2013 is a bad agreement because it grants Iran the status of a nuclear threshold state and does not prevent the possibility of Iran breaking out toward a

bomb should it choose to do so. For its part, the Iranian political elite is also critical of the agreement, saying it represents a blow to the nation's dignity and interests. These critics have used what they view as Iranian concessions as a vehicle to attack Rouhani on other political matters.<sup>1</sup>

Since the agreement was signed, Rouhani, and to a lesser degree Khamenei, has made a point of declaring that Iran does not want nuclear weapons, first and foremost from an ethical and moral standpoint. Rouhani has often quoted a *fatwa* (Islamic religious ruling) attributed to Khamenei that forbids the development, manufacture, and stockpiling of such weapons, considered an anathema to the Islamic worldview, and therefore having far more validity than any agreement Iran could sign with the world powers.<sup>2</sup> One can dismiss these declarations as part of the tactic of deceit Iran has used in recent years – a tactic condoned by Shiite law. One can point to the fact that Khamenei's supposed *fatwa* has never been published, a fact that raises serious doubts about its existence, and the fact that such *fatwas* are never valid for all eternity and can be lifted at a moment's notice or be overridden by a contradictory *fatwa* justifying the development of nuclear weapons for some existential reason or another. On the other hand, one cannot rule out the possibility that Rouhani is personally opposed to nuclear weapons development and that he would prefer that Iran remain a threshold state, based on the rational consideration that this would protect Iran against any external threat but also allow it to reconstitute its economic ties with the United States and attract significant investments from abroad essential to Iran's economic vitality. In addition, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could well set off a nuclear race in the Middle East or push the Gulf states much deeper into the arms of the United States.

Hence, it may be that the alleged *fatwa* is, first and foremost, a tool for resisting the circles pressing for the bomb. Perhaps Khamenei himself has yet to decide whether or not to go all the way, and that he too finds it convenient to cloak his indecision in a moral mantle that will leave him room to justify a change in his approach should he decide to go the nuclear weapons route. Without exaggerating the importance of announcements and declarations of various sorts, one could argue that Iran's repeated assertions that it has no intention of developing nuclear weapons and using religious reasons to bolster them have the power to create an atmosphere or internal dynamic that will make it difficult for the Iranian leadership to do an about-face and work overtly on developing a nuclear weapons system.

## **Retaining the Revolutionary Identity or Opening up to the West?**

The nuclear question is inextricably linked to a much broader issue touching on the regime's revolutionary character. Hostility to the United States and Israel has been one of the ideological mainstays of the Islamic regime since its inception. In the view of the conservative camp, any compromise with the United States is tantamount to admission of the revolution's defeat and sliding down the slippery slope that would expose Iran to the West's cultural influence, which could in turn topple the regime. One manifestation of the conservative attitude was the insistence of retaining the "death to America" slogan, or in Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati's words, "The United States is the Great Satan yesterday and today... 'death to America' is the first option on our table."<sup>3</sup>

By contrast, Rouhani and his supporters are interested in a thaw in the relationship with the United States as a means to improve Iran's failing economy. When speaking with foreigners, Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif stress Iran's desire to promote economic cooperation with the United States. It is difficult to believe they do not understand that this means a price to pay in terms of Iran's conduct.<sup>4</sup> Khamenei, as is his wont, has adopted a middle road that allows him to maneuver between the two factions. On January 17, 2014, he expressed his support for continuing the nuclear negotiations, but took pains to note his pessimism on the chances for reaching a permanent agreement because of what he called fundamental hostility by the United States toward Iran and the ongoing desire to overturn the Islamic regime. On February 19, 2014 Khamenei went further still, calling for the establishment of "a resistance economy" in order to cope with additional sanctions should the talks fail.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, he made it clear that talks with the United States must be limited to the nuclear issue, and that he would be opposed to any sort of broader compromise in relations, especially on cultural matters. As of the time of this writing, Iran operates on the basis of Khamenei's restrictive parameters.

Another area in which there is apparent continuity of Iranian policy is in the Middle East, where activity is informed by strategic considerations of Iran's interests and its national and ideological self-image as the leader of the Muslim world and the political hegemon in the Persian Gulf. If former President Rafsanjani and Rouhani himself were shocked by the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Syria on August 21, 2013, it appears that they got over it. Iran continues to provide much aid to the Syrian

regime and backs its murderous war against the insurgents, because this is an Iranian interest par excellence. Iran even senses that the change in the US approach, which views the Assad regime as the lesser evil compared to various organizations associated with al-Qaeda, makes it easier for Iran to continue to support Assad.

The takeover of large parts of Iraq in June 2014 by the extremist Sunni organization ISIS has brought the internal Iranian dilemma and struggle – between adherence to ideology and the possibility of compromise with the West – into sharper relief. The dissolution of Iraq into ethnic units and the establishment of a radical Sunni entity on Iran’s border would constitute a strategic problem for Iran. On the other hand, this development has strengthened a growing tendency in the United States to see a congruence of interests between the United States and Iran in their joint opposition to the extreme jihadist Sunnis in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. Rouhani and a few of his supporters have spoken openly about possible cooperation with the United States if this “would fight terrorism.” By contrast, the hardliners have accused the United States of being behind ISIS. Iranian Chief of Staff Hassan Firouzabadi went so far as to declare that “cooperation between Iran and the United States will never happen; the concept is meaningless.”<sup>6</sup> Khamenei had initially expressed his opposition to renewed US involvement in Iraq, accusing it of seeking to regain the hegemony it lost there. However, in view of the growing threat by early September 2014, he reportedly agreed to limited cooperation with the US against ISIS. This turnabout does not seem to reflect a strategic, let alone ideological, shift in Iran’s position, as Khamenei simultaneously reiterated his deep resentment and suspicion at the US, and his belief in its inevitable decline. In addition, Iranian parliament members accused the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia of creating ISIS.<sup>7</sup> Rather, in accordance with Iran’s old practice of advancing its interests through proxies, it appears that Iran prefers to let the US shed its blood in the fight against radical Salafi-jihadi organizations. At the same time, while the United States believes that the reconciliation of the Sunnis, especially the tribes that do not support ISIS, is critical to the stabilization of Iraq, Iran seems more determined to preserve the Shiite hegemony of Iraq out of both strategic and ideological considerations.

One area in which initially there was a semblance of change in Iran’s attitude was the attempt to rebuild its relations with its Arab neighbors in the Persian Gulf. The upheavals of the Arab Spring exacerbated the Saudi-

Iranian enmity to the point of an indirect political-strategic confrontation violently conducted by proxies in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. After signing the interim deal with the United States, Iran worked on assuaging the concerns of the Gulf states. Foreign Minister Zarif toured four of them, and declared that improving relations with the Gulf states was a major goal of Iran's foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> Still, it is hard to believe that there has been a fundamental change in Iran's strategy of striving for hegemony in the Gulf. Indeed, Zarif has labored to persuade the Gulf states to agree to a significant Iranian role in ensuring collective security in the Gulf – a vision that means distance from the United States and secured Iranian hegemony. Moreover, the events in Iraq, which have escalated the rhetoric between Iran and Saudi Arabia, exposed the depth of the ideological and strategic enmity in the region, as Iran accused the Saudis of backing the radical Sunni organizations in Iraq. The common fear of ISIS might lead the two countries to deescalate their rivalry, but genuine rapprochement between them is less likely to take place in the short run.<sup>9</sup>

Strategic continuity with a somewhat different tone is also notable in Iran's attitude to Israel. Rouhani has adopted a more sophisticated approach, departing from the deluge of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rhetoric that typified Ahmadinejad's term in office. During his media-hyped visit to the United States in September 2013, Rouhani explained that he is no historian and that therefore he could not express an opinion on the scope of the Holocaust. He condemned criminal acts perpetrated in World War II against Jews and all other groups, but immediately compared them to Israel's actions against the Palestinians.<sup>10</sup> Zarif limited the Holocaust denial in Iran to the former President, and in an interview with German TV in February 2014 even called the Holocaust "a genuine tragedy." Zarif added that if a true resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is found, Iran would not oppose it.<sup>11</sup> In response, the Iranian media denied that Rouhani had acknowledged the Holocaust and that Iran had previously avoided denying the Holocaust. Furthermore, his statements aroused the ire of members of parliament who summoned him to a hearing, often the first step of being removed from office. Under pressure from the conservatives, Zarif denied the statements attributed to him.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Khamenei continued to deny Israel's right to exist, calling Israel, among other names, the "mad, polluted dog" of the region.<sup>13</sup> The interception of the weapons-bearing ship *Klos C* shows that Iran persists in its adamant campaign against Israel via proxies. Here too, events in Iraq



heated up the anti-Israel rhetoric, and even Rouhani charged that Zionists not only rejoiced at the tragic events in the region but also protected Sunni terrorist organizations.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Limits of Liberalism**

The ongoing tension between the Iranian public's expectations for liberalization in culture and politics, which rose after Rouhani's election, and the conservatives' determination to prevent it, fearing the regime's collapse, has gained relatively little attention in Israel compared to the nuclear issue. However, in the long term, this tension is what may have an effect on Iran's regional conduct, because a more open Iran may also mean a less aggressive Iran. During the election campaign, Rouhani made do with modest promises for domestic relief. Since assuming office, some junior political prisoners have been freed and there are reports of a certain easing of media restrictions. Still, there has been a significant increase in the number of executions, a sign that the power of the oppressive mechanisms has not weakened.<sup>15</sup>

Rouhani is not a liberal. It seems that he is intent on avoiding the serious mistakes made by reformist President Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005). A schism with Supreme Leader Khamenei left Khatami politically neutralized; his focus on individual freedoms and rights, instead of on improving the economy, led to his loss of widespread public support and the embrace of Ahmadinejad's populism. Rouhani prefers to focus on the reconstruction of the economy, based on the understanding that this is the most important issue on which he will be judged. According to several sources, he has actually formed a secret pact with the Supreme Leader, whereby Khamenei will support Rouhani's efforts to reach an agreement with the world powers on the nuclear issue in exchange for Rouhani's abstention from any attempt at liberalization.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, either because he understands Iranian society's high expectations or because of his deepening political struggle against the hardline ideological faction, since May 2014 Rouhani has come out with bold statements about the need to allow people "to choose their own path to Paradise, because it is impossible to bring people to Paradise against their will or by force." This declaration – a challenge to the fundamental notion of the Islamic regime forcing Islam's values on others – aroused a wave of irate responses by hardliners.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, past experience in Iran does not bode well for Rouhani in this regard. It is hard to imagine how, without

sufficient pressure from below, the ruling establishment will agree to make fundamental concessions in what it perceives is the most critical field, both in ideological terms and in terms of its survival mechanism.

When it comes to the economy, Rouhani also faces a host of challenges. The nuclear interim deal and the release of some of Iran's frozen assets and, above all, the hope for a full lifting of sanctions if and when a final agreement is signed have created high expectations in the Iranian public for a significant and rapid improvement in the country's difficult economic situation. Similarly, Rouhani is aware of the desire of a large part of his electorate for greater cultural and even political openness. On the other hand, Rouhani faces formidable elements such as the Revolutionary Guards, intent on defending their economic empires and undermining the nuclear talks. In addition, a retreat from Ahmadinejad's populist policy that would entail the continued abolition of subsidies for basic staples and reduced compensation for rising costs because of the abolition of the subsidies will exact a steep toll of the population, at least in the short run. Such steps are liable to erode Rouhani's public support and play into the hands of the conservatives waiting for him to stumble.

## **Conclusion**

It is hard to talk about any essential or strategic moderation in Iran's conduct to date. Moreover, political and ideological struggles make such a change hard because of the existing connection in the conservative perspective between progress on the nuclear question and Iran's improved relations with the West and internal processes of liberalization.

On the other hand, one cannot dismiss what has happened in Iran as irrelevant. Iran's desperate economic state requires the leadership to conduct itself with caution when it comes to the nuclear issue and even postpone, at least for some time, the progress to military nuclear capabilities, and adopt a more restrained foreign policy in order to advance economic partnerships. Against the rigidity of the conservatives, intent on preventing or at least reducing any openness to the West, one may point to the public's high expectations of an improved economy. Given the current atmosphere in the Middle East after the Arab Spring, it is hard for regimes to blatantly avoid such trends of public opinion.

The conservative worries are well-founded. Iran's history has shown that openness, even if limited, has generated many more significant processes

of change than its initiators had in mind. It is impossible to dismiss the possibility – or the hope – that expectations of improvement from below, as well as cautious moves toward openness to the world on the economic level will in the long run create the dynamics that will force the Iranian regime to change its conduct and become more moderate in an authentic and fundamental way.

## Notes

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- 2 See, e.g., Rouhani’s essay published in the Saudi newspaper *al-Eqtisadiyah* on December 19, 2013, at Memri: Special Dispatch Series No.5574, December 23, 2013 – <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/7685.htm>; Hassan Rouhani, “What Iran Wants in 2014,” <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/hassan-rouhani-on-iran-s-new-moderation>.
- 3 Memri, “Senior Members of Iranian Regime on Revolution Day 2014: ‘Iran is Eager for the Fateful War against the United States,’” February 28, 2014, [http://www.memri.org.il/cgi-webaxy/sal/sal.pl?lang=he&ID=107345\\_memri&act=show&dbid=articles&dataid=3587](http://www.memri.org.il/cgi-webaxy/sal/sal.pl?lang=he&ID=107345_memri&act=show&dbid=articles&dataid=3587).
- 4 Scott Peterson, “At Davos, Rouhani Says Iran is Open for Business,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 23, 2104, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2014/0123/At-Davos-Rouhani-says-Iran-is-open-for-business>.
- 5 See note 3. For an expanded discussion of Khamenei’s approach, see Mehdi Khalaji, “Ayatollah Khamenei: Pessimistic Negotiator, Optimistic Strategist,” *PolicyWatch* 2212, Washington Institute, February 21, 2014.
- 6 For an overview of the various approaches, see A. Savyon and Y. Menasherof, “The Iranian Dilemma in Iraq: Cooperation with the United States against the Sunnis or Adhering to the Anti-American Ideological Line,” Memri, June 24, 2014, [http://www.memri.org.il/cgi-webaxy/sal/sal.pl?lang=he&ID=107345\\_memri&act=show&dbid=articles&dataid=3657](http://www.memri.org.il/cgi-webaxy/sal/sal.pl?lang=he&ID=107345_memri&act=show&dbid=articles&dataid=3657).
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- 9 *Resalat*, June 18, 2014; Ragheda Dergham in *al-Hayat*, September 5, 2014.

- 10 “Rouhani Recognized the Holocaust, Within his Limitations,” *Iran-Israel Observer*, September 25, 2013, <http://iran-israel-observer.com/2013/09/25/rouhani-recognized-the-holocaust-within-his-limitations/>.
- 11 Laura Rozen, “Iran’s Rosh Hashana Twitter Diplomacy Stirs Amazement, Disbelief,” *Back Channel*, September 5, 2013, <http://backchannel.al-monitor.com/index.php/2013/09/6144/iran-fm-presidents-rosh-hashana-twitter-diplomacy-stirs-amazement-disbelief/?utm>.
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- 15 “Iran: Abuses Persist Under New Government,” *Human Rights Watch*, January 21, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/21/iran-abuses-persist-under-new-government>.
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# Israel, the United States, and the Military Option against Iran

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Zaki Shalom

For more than a decade, Israel and the United States have been engaged in an intensive strategic dialogue over the nature and scope of Iran's nuclear activity, the implications of the nuclear program, and the ways to handle the issue. Senior spokespeople of both countries have often stressed that although there is not total agreement on all aspects of the issue under discussion, the dialogue takes place in a very open atmosphere based on the understanding that the two nations espouse a common objective: keeping Iran from becoming a military nuclear power. In this context, both are willing to share information, including highly classified material.

At present, the United States and Israel are of the opinion that Iran intends to realize its strategic goal – attaining military nuclear capabilities – at some point in the future, and that Iran possesses the scientific and technological abilities and resources to do so. Furthermore, the United States and Israel agree that a nuclear Iran would pose a real threat to their respective critical interests and those of other nations in the region. Foremost in this regard is the danger of nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East, should Iran have the bomb. The common assumption is that since various Middle East countries view Iran as a dangerous enemy and feel that a nuclear Iran endangers their respective critical interests, they consequently would feel compelled to balance a nuclear Iran with their own nuclear capabilities. In this context, the nations most frequently mentioned are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey. There is broad agreement that those three countries have the

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Prof. Zaki Shalom is a senior research fellow at INSS and a senior researcher at the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism at Ben-Gurion University.

economic, scientific, and technological potential allowing them to reach nuclear capabilities at some point in the future.<sup>1</sup>

If these countries do develop nuclear capabilities, the international community in general and the Middle East in particular will face a potentially disastrous reality. These nations are located in a politically and economically volatile part of the world, home to extremist Islamic organizations. Furthermore, their decision making processes are different from those considered acceptable in modern, developed nations, such as the United States or the former Soviet Union. Therefore, the widespread premise is that it would be highly dangerous to allow the Middle East to become home to the sort of hostility typifying the superpowers during the Cold War. The potential slide toward a nuclear conflict is more palpable in this region where the large Western powers, especially the United States, have critical interests of the highest order – economic, political, and military. Should these suffer, the West's interests in general, and those of the United States in particular, will be seriously damaged.

Moreover, the presence of nuclear weapons in Iranian hands will dramatically bolster Tehran's self-confidence. The Iranian regime upholds a radical Islamic ideology that strives to impose Islamic law on the entire world, starting with the regions close to Iran. With the help of its nuclear weapons, Iran will likely actively seek to undermine the regimes of neighboring countries, starting with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. Iran will be able to count on nuclear weapons to deter these countries from trying to attack it in response to hostile activity. Should this happen, the United States will face a reality in which its major allies in the region – whose powers of response are limited – are seriously challenged.

This situation will confront the United States with a very difficult dilemma. A direct response is liable to drag the United States into an acute confrontation with powerful regional nations such as Iran and Syria, with outcomes difficult to foresee. On the other hand, failure to respond is liable to cause severe damage to US credibility in the eyes of its allies and to its deterrence in the eyes of its enemies. Should Iran realize its objective and take over those countries, either directly or indirectly, critical national American interests will be dealt a harsh blow.

Iran with military nuclear capabilities will almost certainly seek to enhance its support for Islamic terrorist organizations, especially Hizbollah. Iran would conclude that even if these organizations escalate their hostile activities

against various regional countries, first and foremost Israel, the nations under attack will hesitate to respond with its own escalation for fear of a debilitating counterattack, in the form of massive missile and rocket fire at population centers and a confrontation with Iran itself. Such circumstances are ultimately liable to drag the region's nations into a widespread war that would endanger Western interests in general and US interests in particular.

Given the serious dangers inherent in a nuclearized Iran, Israel and the United States believe that every effort must be made to prevent realization of this scenario. President Barack Obama and senior members of the US administration have made it unequivocally clear many times that the United States will not allow Iran to attain military nuclear capabilities, because this would endanger US critical interests. On several occasions, President Obama has stated explicitly that the US policy on Iran's nuclear program is one of "prevention," rather than one of "containment."<sup>2</sup> Israel, especially under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, has also stressed – more directly and more frequently – that it will not allow Iran to become a nuclear power.

Israel and the United States agree that before the military option is contemplated, it is necessary to give diplomatic means and/or economic sanctions a chance to conclude an arrangement with Iran over its nuclear activity. The military option must be considered only after it is clear that all other options have failed to deter Iran and it continues to advance its nuclear activities. President Obama has repeatedly emphasized that the military option is "on the table" and that the United States would consider it should it become clear that it is impossible to stop Iran's nuclear activities using other means. Officially, Israel has stressed that if and when it becomes clear that Iranian nuclearization can be stopped only by military means, it would prefer that the United States take action against Iran, preferably as part of an international coalition.<sup>3</sup>

Israel correctly estimates that US abilities to damage Iran's nuclear facilities effectively are greater than its own. Moreover, while Iran has made it clear that in any attack on it, it would respond against Israel, one may assume that the power of the response against Israel would be much less if an attack were carried out by the United States. Nonetheless, Israel has stated repeatedly that if it becomes clear that the United States does not intend to act militarily against Iran even as Iran's nuclear program advances, Israel will consider using the military option on its own.<sup>4</sup>



The prevailing assumption in Israel is that regarding the Iranian nuclear issue there is a significant gap between the stated US position and the US position in practice, even though President Obama went out of his way to stress that “as President of the United States, I don’t bluff.”<sup>5</sup> There is much skepticism in Israel regarding the United States’ true intentions vis-à-vis Iran. Israel’s concerns intensified with the interim deal signed between the P5+1 and Iran, although President Obama officially stressed that “all options are on the table,” even after the agreement was signed.<sup>6</sup> Officials in Israel claim that in the new reality of the interim deal, Iran is not behaving like a nation threatened seriously by a US attack on its nuclear installations, compared, for example, to 2003, when Iran stopped its nuclear activity because of serious concern about a US attack in the wake of the invasion of Iraq.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, current US assertions that it is pressuring Iran and making intensive threatening moves against it are irrelevant and ineffective measures. Officially, Israel has pointed out over and over again that in the absence of real and credible deterrence against Iran, there is no chance of success for diplomacy.<sup>8</sup>

How does one explain the apparent gap between the official US position on a nuclear Iran and its position in practice? Everyone agrees that stopping Iran’s nuclearization would serve critical US national interests, and there is no doubt that the United States is honestly committed to act however it can – including with military force – to stop the nuclearization of Iran. Nonetheless, the United States is faced with a wide array of constraints and considerations, making it difficult for it to translate that commitment into action of a military nature.

First among these considerations is the United States perception of the severity of the Iranian threat against the United States compared with the severity of the threat against the State of Israel. Israel, cognizant of the murderous nature of radical Islam and its desire to bring about the physical eradication of the State of Israel, views the Iranian threat as direct and existential. Indeed, Iranian leaders have never hidden these malicious intentions. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has often compared Iran’s nuclear activity to events that preceded the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany. He rejects the attempts of Western nations to assuage Israel’s fears of Iran’s nuclear activity. Netanyahu believes that Western powers are gravely mistaken in their attitude to Iran, just as they erred in their complacency toward Hitler.<sup>9</sup>



Israel also rejects the assertion that for several reasons Iran would not dare attack Israel with nuclear weapons. These ostensible arguments include: a) Iran is well aware of Israel's ability to respond with massive force. Iran estimates that Israel itself has nuclear capabilities and that an Israeli second strike response could inflict unbearable damage on Iran; b) Iran is well aware of the fact that Israel has some of the world's most advanced anti-missile defense systems. It therefore must assume that missiles launched at Israel would be intercepted before reaching their destination; c) Iran is also well aware of the fact that there is a high probability that the United States would respond harshly against Iran should the latter attack Israel with nuclear weapons. However, the prevailing opinion in Israel is that given the regime's extremely radical, zealous religious worldview, one must not assume that Iran will act on the basis of Western rational considerations. Israel must take into account that Iran might operate using all tools at its disposal, even if rationally speaking it realizes that this entails grievous risks to Iran.<sup>10</sup>

The characteristics of the State of Israel, especially the fact that it is a relatively small country whose population is concentrated in very small geographical areas, do not allow the country to take the slightest chance when it comes to national security. Should Iran succeed in bombing Israel with a nuclear device, with even a single missile, the human casualties and property damage could prove extensive, and would at the very least require a long and agonizing recovery process.

By contrast, the threat against the United States is much less severe. The United States has no cause for worry, at least not under current circumstances, that Iran could strike it directly even if it possesses nuclear military capability. While some assessments speak of Iranian efforts to develop long range missiles, the US administration is not concerned about the possibility that Iran would attack one of its cities. The risk to the United States from an Iran armed with nuclear weapons is not viewed as a clear and present danger. The main risk for the United States is harm to its regional allies – Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states – and acts of terror acts against United States facilities around the world. The difference in the level of the threat's severity could explain, at least in part, the fact that the United States, unlike Israel, is unwilling to take far-reaching steps in order to stop Iran's nuclear activities.

Moreover, at present the United States is still in the shadow of the trauma it experienced as a result of its extended, blood-soaked, and costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that seriously affected the US economy. In both

regions, it lost many soldiers, leaving fresh scars on American society. Furthermore, wide circles in the United States note the US involvement in the 1991 Gulf War, meant to prevent Iraq, then under the rule of Saddam Hussein, from attaining nuclear weapons. The information that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction proved to be unfounded. Many in the United States are therefore skeptical about the “confident” assessments about Iran’s development of nuclear capabilities, and if this skepticism is justified, there would be no true cause for a US military strike against Iran.<sup>11</sup>

All indications are that the American people are not prepared to supply the administration with the tailwind it needs to engage in military intervention overseas. Some say that the United States is gradually moving toward an isolationist policy. While in his address to West Point graduates in 2014 President Obama said “it is absolutely true that in the 21st century, American isolationism is not an option,” the speech also transmitted the clear message that in the future the United States would have to weigh involvement in overseas conflicts very heavily.<sup>12</sup> The most prominent manifestation of this was provided when the possibility of military action against Syria was discussed, in light of the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime against the civilian population. President Obama explicitly committed the United States to take military action against Syria, but before the action was set to begin, the President decided to ask for Congressional approval. Members of Congress had no intention of supporting the action, most probably due to doubts that their constituents would back them. No military action ended up being taken against Syria; instead, the emphasis shifted to removing the chemical weapons from its territory. There is disagreement among analysts and members of the administration about the nature of the agreement with Syria from the US perspective and the extent to which it can be implemented. Many feel that the President’s conduct on the matter damaged US credibility, and consequently its deterrence as well.

Finally, the time framework of the United States is vastly greater than that of Israel when it comes to the window of opportunity for use of its military capabilities. Former Defense Minister Ehud Barak coined the phrase “zone of immunity” with reference to Israel’s ability to act militarily against Iran. As time passes, he claimed, Israel will find it increasingly difficult to take military action against Iran, so that in the end, Iran may succeed in a “zone of immunity” that will prevent Israel from using the military option against it. From the US perspective, the passage of time has barely any effect on its

use of power against Iran. Its great military power and the vast weaponry at its disposal allow it to deal Iran a heavy military blow also in years to come. This is partly the reason that the United States is not behaving with the same sense of urgency that is gripping Israel.<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Gawdat Bahgat, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Case of Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 3 (2006): 421-43; see especially p. 423, <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/mei/mei/2006/00000060/00000003/art00002>.
- 2 On March 4, 2012, at the annual AIPAC Policy Conference, President Obama said: "Iran's leaders should understand that I do not have a policy of containment; I have a policy to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon." See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2012/03/04/president-obama-2012-aipac-policy-conference#transcript>.
- 3 Zaki Shalom, "The Debate on a Military Option against Iran Revisited: When and by Whom?" *INSS Insight* No. 446, July 17, 2013, <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=5165>.
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- 5 Jeffrey Goldberg, "Obama to Iran and Israel: 'As President of the United States, I Don't Bluff,'" *The Atlantic*, March 2, 2012.
- 6 Interview with NBC, June 2, 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/video/cnbc/53884579#53884579>.
- 7 Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu: 'Credible Military Option Needed against Nuclear Iran,'" *Haaretz*, July 14, 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.535661>. The article cites the Prime Minister as saying that Iran is surging towards developing military nuclear capabilities, expanding and upgrading its enrichment capabilities, and concurrently developing a plutonium reactor.
- 8 Gen. Masoud Jazayeri, the Iranian deputy chief of staff, even stated that Obama's threats against Iran have become a common joke in Iran, especially among children. He dismissed Obama's statements regarding the deployment of US troops as "completely inexpert remarks far from the reality, and these statements can be used as the joke of the year." See "Iran: Obama Threats 'A Joke'; Won't Dismantle Anything – 'That's Our Red Line,'" <http://www.breitbart.com/Breitbart-London/2014/03/06/IRAN-OBAMA-THREATS-A-JOKE-WON-T-DISMANTLE-ANYTHING-THAT-S-OUR-RED-LINE>.
- 9 In his most recent Holocaust Remembrance Day speech at Yad Vashem on April 27, 2014, Netanyahu: "On the eve of the Holocaust, there were Jews who avoided crying out to the world's nations out of fear that the fight against the Nazis would become a Jewish problem. Others believed that if they kept silent, the danger would pass. The kept silent and the disaster struck... So I ask: How is it possible that so many people failed to understand the reality? The bitter and tragic truth is this: it

is not that they did not see it. They did not want to see it. And why did they choose not to see the truth? Because they did not want to face the consequences of that truth... Twenty years earlier, the people of the West experienced a terrible trench war, a war which claimed the lives of 16 million people. Therefore, the leaders of the West operated on the basis of one axiom: avoid another confrontation at any cost, and thus they laid the foundation for the most terrible war in human history. This axiom of avoiding conflict at any cost, this axiom was adopted not only by the leaders. The people themselves, primarily the educated ones, shared it too.” See <http://www.timesofisrael.com/full-transcript-of-netanyahu-speech-for-holocaust-remembrance-day/>.

- 10 In his speech at the Saban Forum, Netanyahu said that a nuclear Iran would change the course of history and that Iran operates on the basis of lunatic principles: “They might speak English and they might make PowerPoint presentations... But when the powers behind the throne, the power on the throne is committed to a radical ideology and pursues it and talks about it again and again, then I say, ‘Beware.’” See <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2013/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-address-to-the-Saban-Forum-8-ec-2013.aspx>.
- 11 In a meeting with the amir of Kuwait in Saudi Arabia on November 21, 1990, President Bush stated: “There is a growing assessment that [Iraqi leader] Saddam Hussein is trying to get a nuclear bomb capability. In fact, this is one of the things that causes most of the concern in the United States. His CW and BW capability and potential is another matter of international concern.” See Minutes of Bilateral Meeting with the Amir of Kuwait, November 21, 1990, President George Bush Presidential Library, <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/>.
- 12 Transcript of President Obama’s Commencement Address at West Point, May 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/us/politics/transcript-of-president-obamas-commencement-address-at-west-point>.
- 13 “Barak: ‘Iran Moving to Immunity against Attack.’” At the Davos global economic forum the Defense Minister said that Tehran is moving to a “zone of immunity” in which it will be impossible to stop its nuclear program by means of a surgical military strike.” *Ynet*, January 27, 2012, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4181657,00.html>.

## US Public Opinion: How “Obamacare” Matters for the Interim Deal

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Owen Alterman, Cameron S. Brown, and Tamar Levkovich

A careful examination of the polling data on American public opinion regarding the interim deal on Iran’s nuclear program reveals a counterintuitive yet telling dynamic about the wider foreign policy debate in the United States. When all relevant factors are taken into account, it appears that the single best predictor of how the average American feels about the Iran deal is not his or her educational level, age, gender, income, religion, or even party identification. Rather, it is what the respondent thinks about “Obamacare” (a.k.a. the Affordable Care Act, President Obama’s signature health insurance reform).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, how one feels about Obamacare is even more strongly correlated with feelings about the interim deal than whether that same person is a foreign policy hawk or dove, or how knowledgeable he or she is about the Iran negotiations.

The following essay surveys and attempts to explain this surprising dynamic. It offers a demographic breakdown of public opinion toward the interim deal and concludes with a brief assessment of implications for Israeli policymakers.

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Owen Alterman, a lawyer, is a research fellow at INSS who specializes in US-Israel relations and other issues of geopolitics and strategic planning.

Cameron S. Brown, a Neubauer research fellow at INSS, is a doctoral student in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, San Diego.

Tamar Levkovich, formerly an intern working with the “Managing the Atom” project at Harvard University’s Belfer Center, is a research assistant in the Arms Control and Regional Security Program at INSS.

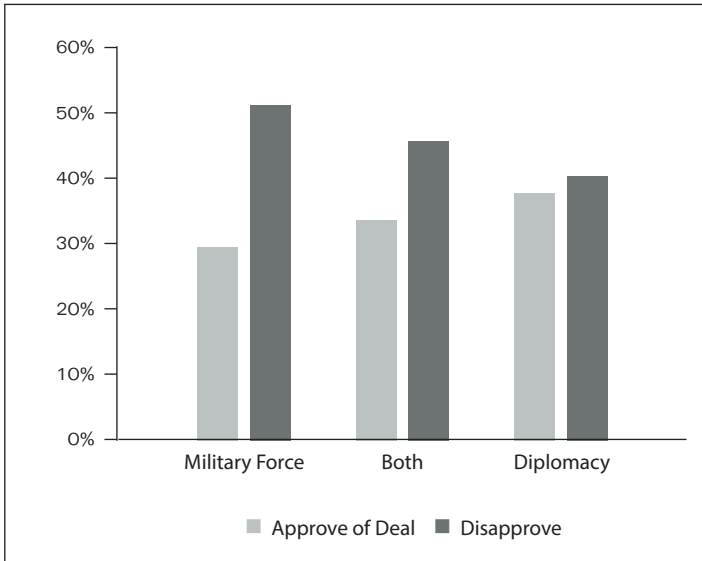
## **Connecting the Dots: The Interim Deal and President Obama's Approval Rating**

Weeks after the signing of the deal with Iran, the Pew Research Center conducted a poll to gauge reactions in US public opinion toward the interim deal.<sup>2</sup> Overall, the poll found that 43 percent of Americans disapproved of the agreement, 32 percent approved, and 26 percent said they did not know or had no opinion.<sup>3</sup> Some 62 percent of respondents said Iran's leaders were "not serious" about addressing the nuclear concerns of the international community, with only 29 percent viewing them as "serious."<sup>4</sup> Views on Iranian leaders' intentions had changed little from those given in response to a similar question one month earlier.

This snapshot of public opinion is important in itself, demonstrating an initial wariness toward the interim deal. Does that skepticism, if not disapproval, reflect a broader foreign policy outlook? In Israel and across the region, policymakers must also wonder to what degree attitudes regarding the interim deal signal broader trends in attitudes toward foreign policy and the Middle East. Specifically, is there a connection between a respondent's opinion of the interim deal and that respondent's identity as "hawkish" or "dovish" on foreign policy?

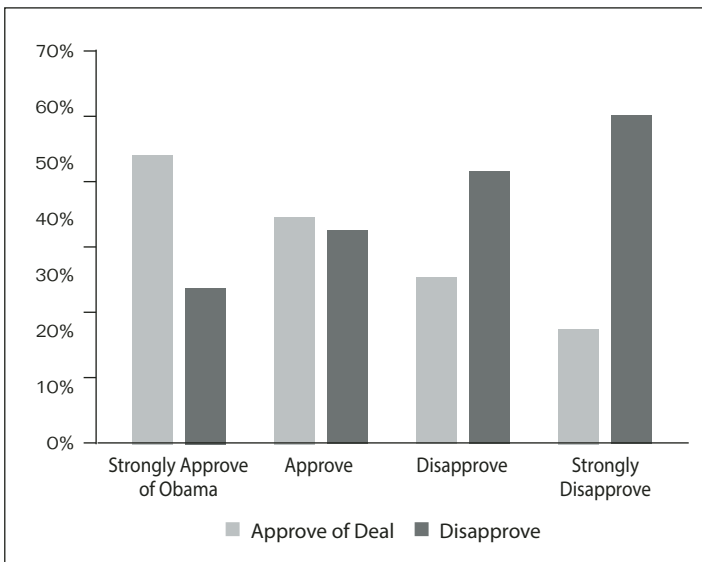
The Pew polling results in fact suggest a connection between the agreement and the wider debate (figure 1). As would be expected, respondents who answer that military force is better than diplomacy at ensuring peace are far less likely to support the agreement. Controlling for a host of other factors,<sup>5</sup> these "hawks" opposed the agreement by 51 to 30 percent. A plurality of "doves" (i.e., those who hold that diplomacy is better than military force) supported the agreement, but notably only by a thin margin (41 percent to 38 percent).

Yet the poll results reveal that respondents' stances are more strongly affected by a different factor: one's opinion of President Obama (figure 2). Controlling for other factors, those with favorable opinions of Obama were far more likely to support the agreement than those with unfavorable opinions. Those who strongly approve of Obama's performance supported the interim deal by a margin of 52 to 28 percent. Obama's fiercest critics – those who strongly disapprove of his performance – were similarly opposed to the agreement (59 to 21 percent).



**Figure 1. “Hawks” vs. “Doves” and Support for the Interim Deal (controlling for other factors)**

**Source:** Authors’ analysis of data provided by the PEW Research Center



**Figure 2. Approval of Obama’s Performance and Support for the Interim Deal (controlling for other factors)**

**Source:** Authors’ analysis of data provided by the PEW Research Center

What is so striking is the degree to which foreign policy is connected to the President's approval rating. For instance, while party identification still matters – i.e., those who identify as supporting the Democratic Party were far more supportive of the interim deal than were Republicans – we find here that opinions about Obama matter more. In fact, we find opinions about Obama have about twice the impact of party identification (on average, 44 vs. 22 percent).<sup>6</sup>

Enter Obamacare: on its policy merits, support for the Affordable Care Act should lack any connection with the interim or a final agreement on Iran's nuclear program. Yet an American's opinion of that law is strongly correlated with his or her views on the interim deal. Even when controlling for other factors, supporters of Obamacare were more than twice as likely to support the agreement with Iran (50 percent supported the Iran deal vs. 23 percent against), while Obamacare's critics were more than twice as likely to oppose it (55 percent for the Iran deal vs. 21 percent against).<sup>7</sup> Amazingly, this correlation is stronger than that of almost any of the many other factors tested – even stronger than that of the respondent's basic foreign policy attitudes (hawk or dove), which logic suggests would be far more closely related.

We find that opinions about Obamacare are such impressive predictors of opinions on Iran because, to a very large degree, Obamacare is a proxy for what the average American thinks of Obama.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, those who like Obama support his policies while those who dislike him oppose his policies, even when taking party affiliation into account. Tracing the correlation between opinion on the interim deal and Obamacare is important and underscores just how much that personal approval factor affects the level of the interim deal's public support.

Although counterintuitive, this finding is consistent with broad academic literature on public opinion.<sup>9</sup> On complex or unfamiliar policy questions, the American public (and publics worldwide as well) tends to rely on a heuristic method in the form of an intellectual shortcut for forming an opinion. Familiarity with the nuances of the Iran agreement, or even Obamacare, requires an investment of time and resources. Much of the public, however, has little incentive to make that investment. Instead, these respondents take their cue on many issues by looking at opinion leaders about whom they do have an opinion. In this case, it is President Obama.

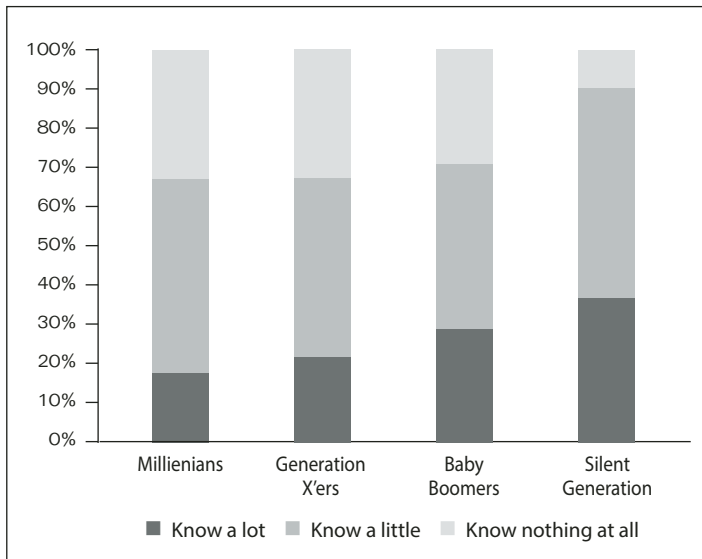


## On Being Older and Wiser: Age, Knowledge, and the Interim Deal

Several other factors play an important role in affecting American public opinion regarding the interim deal. In particular, knowledge plays a crucial role in determining a respondent's attitude toward the interim deal and Iran.

While Pew found that a plurality of respondents disapproved of the interim deal – and this holds true regardless of how much a respondent says he or she knows about the negotiations – a closer analysis of the data reveals a different picture. Controlling for other factors, the more a respondent knows about the negotiations, the more likely the respondent is to approve of the deal.<sup>10</sup> In fact, very knowledgeable Democrats are almost four times more likely to approve of the agreement than Democrats who say they know nothing (64 vs. 17 percent). For Republicans, the highly informed are nearly five times more likely to support the agreement than those who know nothing (28 vs. 6 percent).<sup>11</sup>

This is why generational affiliation matters. Younger respondents tend to know less about the negotiations. Among both Millennials and Generation X'ers, 32 percent report knowing “nothing at all” about the negotiations with Iran, compared to only 18 percent of Baby Boomers and 9 percent among the Silent Generation (figure 3).<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 3. Knowledge about Negotiations with Iran, by Generation**

**Source:** Authors' analysis of data provided by the PEW Research Center

At the same time, Pew found that Millennials and Generation X'ers are not significantly less likely to approve of the deal than are older generations. Yet if knowledge of the interim deal makes a person more likely to approve of it, why are members of the younger generation not more strongly opposed? One reason is that Millennials are far more dovish than older cohorts. Nearly 70 percent of Millennials believe that diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace, ten points higher than Generation X'ers and nearly 20 points higher than that for the Silent Generation. Second, both Millennials and members of Generation X are also more supportive of Obama than other generations, even if their support may be lessening over time.

In addition, Millennials are more likely to believe Iran is serious in its willingness to negotiate, as compared to their older counterparts. Thirty-four percent of this group believe the Iranians are "serious about addressing international concerns about their country's nuclear enrichment program."<sup>13</sup> Only 29 percent of Baby Boomers and 25 percent of the Silent Generation, on the other hand, perceive Iran as serious. It may be that their opposition to using force prompts Millennials to want to believe that Iran is serious, although in fact this may be a case of wishful thinking.

### **And What About Israel?**

Although overall the Pew poll indicates that Americans oppose the interim deal with Iran, some nuances should be kept in mind. First, opinion on the interim deal is linked to opinion of President Obama. Second, although most oppose the agreement, knowledge makes people more likely to approve of the deal. Lastly, younger generations (and Millennials in particular), are more dovish than their elders and more likely to believe Iran is serious about negotiating.

So what does this mean for Israel? Since the negotiations started in 2013, the government of Israel has made an effort to influence US public opinion, repeatedly arguing that the interim deal is a bad deal. The findings put forward by this article suggest that an Israeli public campaign against the agreement may, at a minimum, be ineffective, and perhaps could even be counterproductive. The reason for this skepticism is that US public opinion on this issue is so heavily influenced by the opinion of President Obama. Americans have formed their opinions of the interim deal based largely on the heuristic of attitudes toward Obama, not only through forming foreign policy worldviews and applying them to the Iran case. Israeli public diplomacy

efforts designed to operate on foreign policy predilections therefore seem to have limited utility.

Moreover, given that knowledge about the negotiations is linked to higher levels of support for the interim deal, educating the public might even lead to greater support for the deal. This correlation between more knowledge and more support for the agreement applies both to Democrats (who presumably get information from liberal-leaning sources) and Republicans (who presumably get information from conservative-leaning ones). For that reason, it appears that the link between knowledge and attitudes is independent of the type of information received. This will be critical for Israeli decision makers to keep in mind should the interim deal be extended further or should a final agreement be reached, as Israeli investment in US public diplomacy might yield only limited returns.

## Notes

- 1 Referred to here is the impact, i.e., “economic significance,” not the level of statistical significance. While extremely high ( $p < 0.0001$ ), it is slightly less statistically significant than party affiliation.
- 2 Several polls were taken on this question of public support for the interim deal. Although the overall Pew results were slightly different from other polls, we believe that the question asked was the least leading, was the least likely to suffer from “framing effects,” and provided the most additional data to help our analysis. We wish to thank the Pew Center for graciously providing us with a copy of the full dataset. Unless otherwise noted, all results reported are from our regressions (run as multinomial logit). Full regression tables are available from the authors upon request.
- 3 Pew Research Center, “Limited Support for Iran Nuclear Agreement: Iran’s Leaders Seen as ‘Not Serious’ in Addressing Nuclear Concerns,” December 9, 2013, <http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/09/limited-support-for-iran-nuclear-agreement/>.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 All regression results reported here included respondents’ level of support for Obama, party affiliation, level of knowledge about the negotiations with Iran, whether one is a “hawk” or “dove,” respondents’ gender, income, religious affiliation, generational affiliation, and educational attainment.
- 6 We also find that support for Obama is about twice as statistically significant as is party identification.
- 7 Due to collinearity, we dropped support for Obama from regressions where we include opinions on Obamacare.
- 8 In separate regressions we ran on respondents’ feelings regarding Obamacare, we found that what one thought about President Obama’s performance in office is the most substantial and significant predictive factor.

- 9 Two of the most seminal works in this regard are Samuel Popkin's *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), and Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 10 Here we controlled for party affiliation, support of Obama, hawkishness, generational affiliation, education, gender, and income.
- 11 For Republicans, the gap is actually between those who know "nothing" and "a little/some" about the negotiations. Between those Republicans who report knowing "a little/some" or "a lot" there is no significant difference regarding their stance on the agreement.
- 12 These are commonly used demographic terms to delineate generational affiliation. "Millennials" were born between 1980-2000, Generation X'ers between 1965-79, "Baby Boomers" were born in the period after World War II (1946-64), and the "Silent Generation" was born between 1925-45.
- 13 The question looked only to respondents who declared that they know "a lot" or "a little" about the negotiations. When holding all for other variables, the percent of people who believe Iran is not serious stayed constant with age (62-63 percent).

## PART III

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### Regional Perspectives

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# Israel and the Negotiations on Iran's Nuclear Program

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Shlomo Brom

Israel's approach to the negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran on the Iranian nuclear program has been marked by tension between the intense fear of an agreement that will leave Iran a nuclear threshold state that can break out to nuclear weapons in a relatively short period of time, and the hope that a reasonable agreement will spare Israel the need to consider unattractive options, such as a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. In most cases, the fear is the dominant element, and wields the primary influence over Israel's behavior.

The turning point that led to a resumption of negotiations with Iran was the victory of Hassan Rouhani, a pragmatist, in Iran's presidential elections. Rouhani's first objective was to have international sanctions against Iran lifted by resuming negotiations and reaching an agreement. Israel's response to Rouhani's election was cool, at best. On the one hand, there were clear positive aspects of the election results, including proof of the effectiveness of the sanctions, and the Iranian people's opposition to the Islamic regime and their desire for change. However, the conclusion was that Rouhani's election was a trick by the regime to overcome public opposition and bring about an end to the sanctions by demonstrating to the West the regime's softer side. Rouhani himself was described by Prime Minister Netanyahu as a "wolf in sheep's clothing,"<sup>1</sup> flesh and blood of the regime, and a man whose election was approved by Supreme Leader Khamenei and whose main objective is to help the regime survive. This objective would be achieved through negotiations with a minimum of Iranian concessions.

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Brig. Gen. (ret.) Shlomo Brom is a senior research fellow at INSS and head of the Program on Israeli-Palestinian Relations. He is a former head of strategic planning in the planning branch of the IDF General Staff.

From the start of the negotiations, Israel expressed concerns about Western weakness in dealing with the sophisticated Iranian negotiators, whose objective is clear: to preserve nuclear breakout capability and most of the assets of the nuclear program, and have the sanctions lifted. The West is perceived as fearing the consequences of a military strike against the Iranian nuclear program, and therefore, as striving to reach an agreement at almost any price. At the same time, in the wider debate in Israel, some have argued that the West started the negotiations from a position of strength because of the effectiveness of the sanctions, and that it is actually Iran that feels pressured to reach an agreement quickly. Some are concerned that the West does not understand this, and that therefore it will not leverage the potential of this advantage.

Israel's fears are tied to the perception that President Obama is weak and does not cope well with ideological rivals that display a coherent anti-Western world view, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Vladimir Putin's Russia. Obama's decision not to attack Syria as punishment for its use of chemical weapons against civilians during the civil war, and his preference for an agreement with Syria on dismantling its chemical weapons, was perceived as further proof of his weakness, since he recoils from the possibility of using military force – despite the fact that in retrospect, Israel has benefited from and expressed satisfaction with the agreement to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons, most of which has already been implemented (all declared materials have already been removed from Syria to be destroyed on the high seas).<sup>2</sup>

The signing of the interim deal on November 24, 2013, which is perceived by many as a bad agreement<sup>3</sup> for several reasons, raised the level of fear in Israel. First, the agreement leaves Iran's enrichment capability intact, and leaves the large quantity of uranium enriched to a low level inside Iran. This means that Iran's nuclear breakout capability has not been significantly damaged. The reduction in the amount of uranium enriched to 20 percent is seen as insignificant and as a way to create a false impression of a true limitation of Iran's breakout capability. At the same time, and for the same reason, the agreement is perceived as granting international legitimacy to Iranian enrichment capability, even though the P5+1 have refrained from inserting an explicit statement to this effect in the agreement, as the Iranians demanded. On the other hand, it was argued that the partial lifting of the sanctions and the new spirit created by the agreement would lead to the rapid erosion of the sanctions, and perhaps to their total collapse, even without



a final agreement. Another fear was that the parties would not succeed in reaching an agreement and would prefer not to declare failure, but to extend the period of negotiations with no limit, while in the meantime the centrifuges would continue to spin, increasing the inventories of uranium enriched to a low level, and in fact, strengthening Iran's ability to break out to nuclear weapons within a short time. These fears even led to apocalyptic statements in Israel such as, "We will know how to defend ourselves," which indicated Israel's intention to return to active discussion of the military option.<sup>4</sup> In practice, it appears that these harsh comments also stemmed from the Prime Minister's frustration resulting from his awareness that an agreement between Iran and the world powers would make an independent Israeli military strike against the Iranian nuclear program even more difficult.

Netanyahu's harsh response to the interim deal has been criticized in the public debate in Israel and called disproportionate. Thus, for example, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin argued that "the Geneva agreement is not a 'historic agreement' and is not a 'historic failure.'"<sup>5</sup> The main argument was that this agreement is limited, that its entire purpose is to allow time for conducting negotiations on a comprehensive final agreement, and that as such, is not inherently a bad agreement.

It appears that Israel subsequently moderated its approach to the interim deal,<sup>6</sup> yet it is difficult to know whether this change stems from domestic criticism in Israel or whether is a result of a growing realization that the fears about the agreement were not well founded. It has become clear that the sanctions regime has not collapsed, partly because of measures taken by the United States. Indeed, the opposite claim can also be made – that Iran is very disappointed by the measures taken to ease the sanctions because they have not led to the desired economic results. Businesspeople are not keen on resuming business with Iran because of the great uncertainty this involves and because the financial sanctions, which are still in place, make it difficult to use the monies released under the agreement. A further reason for Israel's moderated response could be an understanding by the government that continued harsh responses, which are perceived as disproportionate, would harm Israel's ability to hold an effective dialogue that would influence primarily the position of the United States, and to a lesser extent, the other participants in the negotiations with Iran. In addition, Israel prefers continuing negotiations over a rapid move to a bad agreement, and it is now focused more on these dialogues and less on public statements.

In July 2014 the parties to the negotiations took advantage of the option included in the interim deal to extend the talks. The talks were extended for four months; following this, three scenarios are possible. The first scenario is an agreement that is acceptable from Israel's point of view, that is, an agreement that is good enough even if it does not include all the provisions that Israel wants. This is a scenario that does not require Israel to take any step beyond monitoring implementation of the agreement. The second scenario is an agreement that allows Iran nuclear breakout capability, and which is therefore bad for Israel. In such a situation, Israel would be forced to consider independent military measures against the Iranian nuclear program in a very problematic political situation. A military initiative against the will of the international community, after the world powers have signed an agreement with Iran, would be a costly measure. In the third scenario, the negotiations would fail and there would be no agreement. It is still possible that the negotiators would aspire to avoid a declaration of failure and attempt to extend the negotiations. In any case, Israel would have to consider its moves, although the scenario in which the negotiations are stopped would make it easier for it to do so in consultation and cooperation with the West.

## Notes

- 1 Tom Eatkins, "Netanyahu: Iran's President is 'Wolf in Sheep's Clothing,'" *CNN*, October 2, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/01/world/meast/israel-netanyahu-iran/>.
- 2 This is clear from Netanyahu's comments in his interview with Jeffrey Goldberg in May 2014. See "Netanyahu: Israel Does Not Spy on the United States. Nothing. Zero," *Ynet*, May 23, 2014, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4522942,00.html>.
- 3 David Simpson, "Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu: Iran Nuclear Deal 'Historic Mistake,'" *CNN*, November 25, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/24/world/meast/iran-israel/>.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Amos Yadlin, "The Geneva Agreement: Neither a 'Historic Agreement' nor a 'Historic Failure,'" *INSS Insight* No. 489, November 27, 2013.
- 6 Amir Tibon, "Israel to West: 'We Won't Go Wild' if Negotiations with Iran Extended," *Walla News*, May 27, 2014, <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/2687/2750269>.

# The Gulf States and Iran following the Interim Deal

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Yoel Guzansky and Erez Striem

The Gulf states' policy toward Iran in general and the Iranian nuclear program in particular is full of contradictions; these states do not wish to have a radical Shiite state like Iran seeking to dictate the agenda in the Gulf by virtue of its nuclear capability. On the other hand, they fear that in the absence of a diplomatic option, Iran's nuclear facilities may be targeted, resulting in a conflict that places them in the line of fire. In the past, the Gulf states have witnessed the effect of regional conflicts on their security and economic stability. They therefore seek to avoid a conflict that may incur additional challenges in addition to the challenges created by the turmoil of the Arab Spring.

In a speech immediately after the signing of the interim deal with Iran, United States President Barack Obama noted that he was aware of the US allies' concerns and justified doubts. However, these comments, along with US diplomatic activities and significant arms sales intended to reassure America's Arab allies, did not alleviate concern that the agreement is based on Iranian subterfuge and Western self-deception. The Arab world, particularly the Gulf states, fears the agreement's potential for US-Iranian rapprochement and the consequences this will have for Iran's status in the Gulf, far more than it fears the agreement's technical significance. Publicly, the Arab states recognize Iran's "right" to possess nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, but they have pleaded with Tehran to cooperate with the international community and

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Yoel Guzansky, a research fellow at INSS, specializes in issues related to the security of the Gulf states. Before joining INSS he coordinated work on the Iranian nuclear challenge at the National Security Council in the Prime Minister's Office. Erez Striem is a former intern at INSS.

the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). They have also expressed support for a diplomatic solution to the nuclear crisis and a desire to take a more active role in facilitating such a solution, since they fear that the United States may reach a final agreement at their expense.

The Sunni Arab world's hostility toward Shiite Iran is fueled by historical and sectarian hatred, clearly reflected in modern Middle East geopolitics. The Arab Spring and Iranian support of the Assad regime have only increased Arab hostility toward Iran, to which the continued progress of the Iranian nuclear program has also contributed significantly. The openness conveyed by Rouhani and his people, dubbed the "charm offensive," is perceived by the Gulf states as an exercise in deception. In the eyes of the Gulf leaders, a (final) agreement between the West and Iran on the nuclear issue would help Iran escape the isolation it has suffered since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Saudi Arabia and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) mainly fear reconciliation between Iran and the West, which would provide the Iranian regime with legitimacy in the eyes of the international community, allowing it to increase its influence in the region and its involvement in their domestic affairs. Consequently, the Saudis expressed concern regarding the Geneva agreement and attempted to persuade the United States not to surrender to the Iranian President's "sweet talk," as they put it. Just before the agreement was signed, the Saudi ambassador in London criticized the United States for its haste: "We are not going to sit idly by and receive a threat there and not think seriously how we can best defend our country and our region," stated the ambassador, adding that "all options are available."<sup>1</sup> Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz al-Saud noted in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* that "America is shooting itself in the foot," and even expressed identification with Israel's positions on Iran: "For the first time, Saudi Arabian interests and Israel are almost parallel," added al-Saud.<sup>2</sup>

The uncertainty over the future of US involvement in the region is very troubling to Gulf leaders. The United States does not conceal its desire to limit the extent of its military commitments in the Middle East, which is in keeping with its intention to divert the US foreign policy's attention toward East Asia. A possible detente in US-Iran relations is also perceived in Riyadh as a deadly blow to Saudi Arabia's relations with the United States.

The Saudis reflect on the days prior to the Islamic Revolution, when Iran served as a main strategic anchor for the United States in the region. Given the current situation, a return to close strategic relations between Iran and

the West appears to be a distant vision, yet any rapprochement between Iran and the United States raises concerns among the monarchies in the Arabian Peninsula. The events of the past year, mainly the Geneva Agreement and the American refusal to use force against the Assad regime following its use of chemical weapons, have further strengthened the image of the United States as a superpower in retreat. The United States' failure to stand by its former allies, such as Mubarak and Ben Ali during the wave of revolutions in the Arab world, has also reinforced the feeling among its Arab allies that its strategic support is not as reliable as it was in the past. In addition, the Gulf monarchies fear that the United States will achieve energy independence by the end of the current decade, which could remove the main basis of the strategic alliance with its Arab allies.

Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states are concerned that the agreement with Iran is nothing more than preparation for the United States' detachment from the region, which would leave Iran as a nuclear threshold state with an improved standing in the region. The feeling in the Gulf is that Iran is gaining strength while the United States is becoming less attractive. The options available are neither numerous nor optimal. No other world power is capable of or interested in filling the US role of maintaining security in the Gulf. Furthermore, at this point, there appears to be little likelihood of closer cooperation in the framework of the GCC and creation of a unified regional bloc. Arab states that have previously played a major role in Gulf politics, such as Egypt and Jordan, are currently relatively weak and preoccupied with domestic problems.

Prior to the signing of the interim deal, Iran had attempted to alleviate the tension with its neighbors. In an article published in *a-Sharq al-Awsat*, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohamad Javad Zarif called upon Iran's neighbors to establish a new regional order in the Gulf that would be free of intervention by outside parties. In a clear reference to the American presence in the Gulf, Zarif wrote, "The presence of foreign forces has historically resulted in domestic instability within the countries hosting them and exacerbated the existing tensions between these countries and other regional states."<sup>3</sup> Since the agreement was signed between Iran and the six world powers in late November, Tehran has been conducting a "charm offensive" aimed at the small Gulf emirates. A few days after the signing, Foreign Minister Zarif paid a visit to all GCC members with the exception of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The declared objective of the visits was to diffuse tensions

between Iran and its neighbors, which had increased under Iran's former President Ahmadinejad, and to attempt to turn over a new leaf throughout the Gulf. A number of high-ranking figures from the Gulf states went on highly publicized visits to Tehran, where they met with the Iranian leadership.

In fact, Iran is using a similar tactic against the Gulf states to that which it used during the negotiations with the international community on the nuclear issue: exploiting the existing disagreements between its adversaries in order to prevent the formation of a united front against it. Iran perceives Saudi Arabia, along with the United States, as the main threat to its stability and its regional ambitions. Not only is the Saudi kingdom Iran's largest ideological and religious competitor, but it is also the main sponsor of Iran's rivals in the Arab and Islamic world. Saudi Arabia is also the only state in the Gulf region that has the economic and military capabilities necessary to constitute a threat to the Islamic Republic, and it is the most conspicuous opponent of Iran, other than Israel, in its contacts with the leaders of the international community (even though this opposition is mainly expressed behind closed doors). Therefore, Iran is attempting to drive a wedge between Saudi Arabia and its traditional allies in the Gulf so as to make it difficult for the Saudis to unite the GCC behind them and in order to politically isolate Saudi Arabia.

The Iranian attempt to isolate Saudi Arabia includes action on two fronts; the first is the "charm offensive" toward the Gulf emirates and an attempt to repair Iran's relations with the smaller emirates that do not constitute a security threat in and of themselves, nor do they pose a challenge to Iranian ambitions. This attempt includes a concentrated diplomatic effort to assuage these states' fears of Iranian ambitions and an attempt to promote their cooperation with Iran in various areas. Iran is also trying to indirectly influence the negotiations in which it is engaged, hoping that the Gulf states will moderate their criticism and their pressure on the United States on the issue of Iran. Notwithstanding this Iranian activity in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia is having difficulty forming a united front to balance Iran's rising power, as evidenced by the latest crisis in the GCC over Qatar's support of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

The second front for action includes an Iranian attempt to present Saudi Arabia to the world, and to its allies in particular, as undermining regional security by supporting radical elements and fanning sectarian tensions. Several Iranian media outlets have begun an aggressive anti-Saudi and anti-Wahhabi campaign including genuine incitement, to the point of calling for

violent retaliation by Shiites against the royal family. Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei has also accused Saudi Arabia of fanning inter-ethnic violence in the region. During Islamic Unity Week in January 2014, Khamenei noted that, "Unfortunately, some Muslim governments ignorantly fuel the conflicts; they do not realize that fueling these conflicts ignites a fire whose flames will seize all of them." This was a veiled threat to the Saudi royal family.<sup>4</sup>

Since the agreement finalization, Iran has become less isolated, and its nuclear project has to a large extent received international approval. This was achieved without a Western demand to cease its involvement in the affairs of other countries in the region, from Yemen to Iraq and Syria, and without stopping its support for terrorist organizations. The Gulf states would have preferred to see continuing pressure caused by the sanctions against Iran, which would isolate and weaken it, on the one hand, and could prevent the nuclear crisis from deteriorating into a military conflict, on the other. In their view, Rouhani's election and the agreement with the world powers on the nuclear issue are a (first) step in the right direction, but the Iranian "sweet talk" should be translated into action. However, their criticism is directed primarily at the United States for accepting Iran with open arms, and at the fact that the Gulf states did not participate in the talks. Prince Turki al-Faisal, former head of Saudi Intelligence and a former ambassador to the United Kingdom and the United States, had stated that it is important for the Saudis to sit at the same table as the world powers. He expressed disappointment that the very fact of the talks was (initially) kept secret, as he felt it increases mistrust between the United States and its allies.<sup>5</sup>

Despite concerns about the progress of the Iranian nuclear program, and perhaps as a reflection of them, since the moment the interim deal became an established fact the Gulf states have not deviated from their tendency to present an official position that is moderate and restrained. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia's response to the signing of the agreement sounded skeptical and forced. Particularly notable was the statement that "if there was goodwill," the agreement does bear hope.<sup>6</sup> Other Gulf states that have opposed the agreement during the talks also published announcements welcoming it and stating that it was an opportunity to restore security and stability to the region. However, since the signing of the agreement, there has been very little progress in restoring stability to the Gulf region or to other regions in the Arab world that have suffered from the Saudi-Iranian conflict.

The direction of developments in the Arab world and the Gulf depends to a large extent on the future of the negotiations for a permanent agreement between the United States and the world powers, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other. The chances of reaching such an agreement are still unclear. It would thus be an error to detach the agreement from the regional context and from appropriate attention by the United States to the fears of its Arab allies.

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## A Sigh of Relief: The Turkish Perspective on the Interim Deal with Iran

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Gallia Lindenstrauß

Overall, the official Turkish response to the signing of the interim deal by Iran and the P5+1 was positive. Turkish President Abdullah Gul posted on his Twitter account that it was a significant step forward and that he hoped the parties would quickly reach a final agreement. Gul welcomed the fact that the solution was reached through negotiations and noted that in the past, Turkey had facilitated similar diplomatic deliberations between Iran and the world powers.<sup>1</sup> An announcement by the Turkish Foreign Ministry<sup>2</sup> referred to the agreement with Iran as the “first positive, tangible development” since the Tehran declaration of 2010,<sup>3</sup> which was the culmination of negotiations between Turkey, Brazil, and Iran in an effort to solve the crisis between Iran and the global powers. On November 26, 2013, in his weekly speech to representatives from his party in the parliament, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan welcomed the signing of the agreement as well. Erdogan noted that this development was proof that Turkey was right in signing the Tehran declaration, along with Iran and Brazil.<sup>4</sup> Of note in these comments is not only the positive tone regarding the interim deal, but also the emphasis placed on the notion that it is actually a direct continuation of Turkey and Brazil’s accomplishment in their joint contacts with Iran in 2010. This statement contains implicit criticism of the United States for not supporting the agreement in the past (even though Turkey and Brazil believed they were acting in accordance with prior understandings with the United States). In addition, this statement can be construed as critical of

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Dr. Gallia Lindenstrauß is a research fellow at INSS, specializing in Israel-Turkey relations and Turkish foreign policy.

American anger at Turkey and Brazil's vote in the UN Security Council in June 2010 against a fourth round of sanctions on Iran.

Turkey's positive attitude regarding the interim deal was consistent with its previous policy toward the Iranian nuclear program. Turkey stresses that Iran has a right to develop a nuclear program for peaceful purposes, and that the best route to promoting this objective is negotiations rather than sanctions and threats of a military strike. Several factors may explain this Turkish position; first, Turkey is interested in developing a civilian nuclear program, and therefore warns against a monopoly of the current nuclear powers and the establishment of a kind of "nuclear OPEC." In this context, Turkey has declared its right to enrich uranium on its soil in the future.<sup>5</sup> Second, Turkey fears that a preemptive strike on Iran (American or Israeli) may take a toll on Turkey. Turkey fears that a potential Iranian response may include a military strike, and that as a NATO member Turkey may be among those targeted. Third, given the existing trade relations between Turkey and Iran and the desire to see them expanded, the international sanctions on Iran are perceived as potentially negative for the Turkish economy. Furthermore, the Turkish public harbors strong anti-American sentiments, and Iran is viewed as one of the countries confronting what is perceived as American hegemony.<sup>6</sup>

Although the official Turkish rhetoric emphasizes Iran's right to develop a civilian nuclear program, Turkey has expressed its opposition to Iran choosing the path of nuclearization for military purposes.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Turkey stressed the importance of diplomacy and its support of the vision of the Middle East as a "weapons of mass destruction free zone" (WMDfz). In this context, it extensively criticized Israel and the "hypocrisy of the West" for ignoring Israel's nuclear capability.<sup>8</sup> In addition, Turkey continues to perceive itself as relying, first and foremost, on the NATO nuclear defense umbrella, but there are already signs indicating that it is developing capabilities that could be converted, when necessary, into a military nuclear program. One such sign is its civilian nuclear program: a first civilian reactor for energy use is under construction with the help of a Russian government company, Rusatom, and is expected to be completed in 2020; in October 2013, an agreement was signed with Japan for the construction of a second reactor<sup>9</sup> and there are also plans to build a third reactor.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Turkey has a program for the future development of an intercontinental ballistic missile. Moreover, it was apparently successful in developing a medium-range (800 km) ballistic missile,<sup>11</sup> and is making progress in developing independent

satellite capabilities.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the fact that a Chinese company won a Turkish tender for the purchase of missile defense systems is also perceived, should they complete the deal, as evidence that the continued close relations between Turkey and NATO can no longer be taken for granted.

At the time the interim deal was signed, Turkey and Iran were attempting to improve their relationship; recent years have seen increased tension due to their opposing positions regarding Syria's civil war.<sup>13</sup> One expression of these attempts to improve relations was Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Iran in January 2014, during which Turkey and Iran signed three trade agreements, and Erdogan expressed his hope that trade between the countries would reach about 30 billion dollars by 2015. According to official estimates, in 2012, the volume of trade was about 21.8 billion dollars, while in 2013, it was approximately 13.5 billion.<sup>14</sup> The reason behind the sharp decline from 2012 to 2013 was the tightening of the sanctions regime against Iran, leading to restrictions on importing Iranian oil and gas and a significant decline in Iran's ability to pay for products imported from Turkey. From this point of view, Turkey hopes that the interim deal, and more so, any final agreement with Iran, will significantly contribute to Turkish-Iranian trade relations.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, at a joint press conference held by President Gul and Iranian president Hassan Rouhani during the latter's visit to Ankara in June 2014, Gul stated that Turkey supports an agreement that will completely lift the sanctions on Iran.<sup>16</sup>

Not long after the interim deal signing, widespread incidents of corruption were exposed in Turkey, and senior officials, among them ministers and even Erdogan and his family were implicated. While these incidents have led the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to focus on domestic affairs, they are also relevant in the Iranian context, seeing as one of the corruption scandals involved exchange of oil for gold between Iran and Turkey. There is nothing new in the information that Turkey acquired energy products from Iran and deposited payment in Turkish banks to assist Iran in facing the banking sanctions against it or in the fact that this money was used to purchase large quantities of gold that were later sent to Iran. However, the scope of the corruption exposed in this context indicates that these transactions were on an even larger scale than that estimated by the West.<sup>17</sup>

Given the turmoil in the Middle East in recent years and the tension between Iran and Turkey, especially in the context of the Syrian civil war, it is rather surprising that Turkey adopted a consistent position, openly declaring its

support of Iran's right to develop a nuclear program for peaceful purposes, ignoring Iran's violations of its commitments as a signatory state to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT). Turkey's positive response to the interim deal is also in line with this position. However, a thorough examination of the pattern of relations between Turkey and Iran shows that Turkish dependence on energy imports from Iran and Iranian dependence on Turkey to circumvent some of the sanctions, as well as the fact that the two countries are neighbors and have no territorial dispute, allow them to maintain a certain level of ongoing cooperation. From this perspective, Turkey's sympathetic attitude toward some of Iran's claims in the nuclear context is less surprising. At the same time, we can see initial Turkish steps preparing for a future in which Iran does succeed in acquiring military nuclear capability. From this point of view, Turkey's NATO partners, and in particular, the United States, should maintain their current commitments and perhaps even expand them in the future if they wish to prevent Turkey from joining the nuclear arms race.

## Notes

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# CONCLUSION

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What's in a Deal?

**Israel's "Strategic Flexibility"**

Amos Yadlin and Avner Golov / 87





## Israel's "Strategic Flexibility"

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Amos Yadlin and Avner Golov

Israel's primary strategic goal is to prevent Iran from attaining the ability to develop nuclear weapons, which would allow Tehran to break out to a bomb at its discretion. A nuclear Iran would dramatically change the balance of power in the Middle East and encourage further nuclear arms proliferation in the region among Iran's enemies, first and foremost Saudi Arabia. An Iranian nuclear bomb would allow the radical Tehran regime to assert its influence throughout the region, affect global oil prices, and perhaps even attain regional hegemony. This, in turn, may damage efforts to promote peace in the region, encourage terrorism, and endanger the global arms nonproliferation regime.

The best way to keep Tehran from developing such capabilities is to prevent uranium enrichment and plutonium production. In contrast to Iranian claims, international law does not ensure these rights. Like every other nation, Iran has the right to a civilian nuclear program. However, as is the case with over 30 other countries, the enriched materials can be procured from a different country and then used for local energy production. Nevertheless, Iran continues to blatantly violate international law, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), of which it is a member. These violations, as well as Iran's clandestine nuclear programs, increase the need to restore trust with regard to Iran's intentions, before the international community can allow the completion of an independent fuel cycle, which could

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Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin is the Director of INSS. In his long career in the IDF, he served as head of Military Intelligence, commander of the military colleges, defense attaché to the United States, and deputy commander of the Israel Air Force.

Avner Golov, a research associate at INSS, is a doctoral student at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

at a moment's notice be used to manufacture nuclear weapons. Recognition of Iran's right to independent enrichment as part of the final deal will result in official international recognition of Iran as a nuclear threshold state. The Israeli government is opposed to such a notion, and its policy is supported by six UN Security Council resolutions calling for the immediate suspension of the Iranian enrichment process.

Nevertheless, in the interim deal signed with Iran, which came into effect on January 20, 2014, the world powers decided to relinquish this demand. While the agreement contained only an insinuation that in the final agreement Iran would have an independent enrichment program, Wendy Sherman, the US negotiations team leader, made a clear and public declaration to this effect during her visit to Israel in February 2014. The world powers' acknowledgment of Iran's enrichment program as part of a final agreement is a significant Iranian achievement that Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, attributes to President Rouhani's strategy of "heroic flexibility" vis-à-vis the West.

Israel is thus left to decide whether it should maintain its "zero enrichment" principle, and thereby risk being unable to affect the dynamics of the negotiations, which have already moved beyond the question of Iran having an independent enrichment program to a discussion of the scope and features of such a program and the extent of its supervision. Israel has another alternative, namely, to adjust its official policy to current international reality and, together with the United States, formulate a new demand that would ensure that the world powers' expected agreement distance Iran from the nuclear threshold, and facilitate discovery of Iranian violations and formation of an adequate response. This alternative is not ideal and will not keep Iran from reaching the threshold zone. However, if Iran, claiming that its nuclear program is only intended for civilian use, agrees to dismantle some key components of its nuclear program that may serve a breakout to a nuclear bomb, a concession that is acceptable to Israel can be reached, one that will ensure the Israeli goal of preventing Iran from attaining practical capabilities of developing nuclear arms.

The test of such an agreement would be the "Iranian threshold time" or "the dimensions of Iran's threshold zone," i.e., the time required to produce nuclear arms, should Iran decide to violate the agreement. Israel could agree to a situation in which Iran's "threshold time" is at the very least two to

three years. To achieve this, any final agreement between the world powers and Iran must refer to eleven components:

1. An Iranian declaration: Supreme Leader Khamenei must announce, clearly and publicly, that Iran will not attempt to attain nuclear weapons under any circumstance. It is necessary that Tehran clarify the vagueness regarding a *fatwa* on the subject that was never presented to the international community.
2. A legal framework: according to the interim deal, Iran undertakes the provisions voluntarily, i.e., it is able to discontinue its adherence to the agreement pending a unilateral decision on its part. Nevertheless, the final agreement must clearly establish that a unilateral breach of the agreement is sufficient grounds for punitive action. For Israel to accept this agreement, it is necessary to define an unequivocal obligation on Iran's part, whose violation would be handled by the UN Security Council under Chapter 7, which allows use of force in order to ensure adherence to Security Council resolutions.
3. The number of centrifuges: currently, Iran possesses approximately 19,000 centrifuges; of them, 10,000 are spinning, thereby allowing Iran to manufacture nuclear bombs within a few months should it choose to do so. A final agreement acceptable to Israel must include the dismantling of most of the centrifuges, leaving a token number of first generation (R-1) centrifuges.
4. Enriched material arsenal: currently, Iran possesses roughly 7.7 tons of low-level enriched uranium. This is enough for five or six nuclear bombs. A final agreement must limit the amount of material enriched to a very low level (up to 5 percent) and a token quantity of such material, which is less than the amount needed for a single bomb.
5. Enrichment level: even if Iran is permitted to enrich uranium independently, it should be limited to a very low level (up to 5 percent). Nonetheless, it is important to note that any country possessing sufficient knowledge to enrich to a low level has the technological knowledge needed to enrich to military grade (above 90 percent), and only needs more time for the enrichment process.
6. The future of the Fordow enrichment facility: Iran must dismantle the enrichment facility near the city of Qom. The facility was built into the mountainside in order to hinder any attempt to attack the Iranian nuclear program's infrastructure, should Tehran decide to use it for military

- purposes. At the very least, an acceptable final agreement must demand the conversion of the facility so that it cannot be used for enrichment (as President Obama declared at the 10<sup>th</sup> Saban Forum on December 7, 2013).
7. The Arak reactor: a few years ago, Iran began building a heavy water reactor, which after its completion could provide fissile material for a plutonium bomb. An acceptable final agreement must demand that the facility be dismantled, or at the very least converted so that it cannot serve for military purposes (in the past, the US administration has mentioned this as well).
  8. The military dimensions: Iran's nuclear program has other aspects connected to its military purpose, especially the weaponry for manufacturing detonation devices for the bomb, based at the Parchin facility. So far, Iran has yet to provide answers to questions posed by the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding the military nature of the program. These questions must be answered and resolved as part of an acceptable final agreement.
  9. Inspection: given Iran's blatant violations of international law and agreements it has signed with the West, an acceptable final agreement must include tight and effective supervision of the various nuclear activities in Iran. Such supervision would reduce the chances that Iranian violations will go undetected. It must be based on the Additional Protocol, though it should not be limited to it. The level of supervision must be increased and tightened in order to address the challenge of Iranian subterfuge and secrecy, as has been its behavior over past decade.
  10. Research and development: in addition to the enrichment activity, Iran has been upgrading its centrifuges to more advanced and efficient models, capable of enriching larger quantities of uranium in a shorter time period. This reduces the time needed to produce nuclear weapons and therefore reduces Iran's "nuclear threshold" time. The world powers must demand full supervision and limitation of Iran's research and development program.
  11. The agreement's validity: the final agreement must determine a timeframe for examining Iran's conduct. At the end of the "trial period," Iran will be allowed to resume the status of a regular NPT member, and the restrictions on its nuclear program will not differ from other members. It is recommended that a twenty-year year trial period be stipulated, providing sufficient time to ensure a true change in Iran's strategic

conduct and allow the establishment of effective supervision systems and cooperation that would be characterized by transparency between Iran and the international community.

Should the United States adopt these suggestions and include them in an agreement with Iran, the West's strategic position vis-à-vis Iran will improve. In addition, Israel's strategic objectives in the international reality following the interim deal will be met. If Iran agrees to dismantle key components of its nuclear program, the alternative outlined above would result in a final agreement acceptable to Israel. As such, the discussion about the conditions of the agreement would not remain exclusively between Iran and the world powers.

Since Israel is not present at the discussions between Iran and the world powers, its influence must be channeled primarily through Washington. Therefore, Israel must immediately reestablish an intensive dialogue with the United States, focusing on three issues:

1. Expanding intelligence cooperation between Israel and the West in order to formulate a response to the loopholes in the interim deal and expose Iranian violations, Iranian efforts in the military field, and activity in clandestine facilities. It is critical that all countries cooperate in preserving and maintaining the international sanctions against Iran and the sanctions' enforcement system, to prevent a situation in which Iran succeeds in rendering the sanctions – the West's main means of exerting pressure – ineffective.
2. Setting clear and accepted parameters for the final agreement based on the outline presented in this paper. It is important that Jerusalem and Washington coordinate their positions on key issues of the final agreement listed in the eleven points above, conveying that this is Israel's bottom-line alternative, and that any mitigation would be unacceptable.
3. Should an agreement extending Iran's threshold time from several months to several years not materialize, the United States and Israel must coordinate their actions. While Israel must strive for coordination with the White House, it should prepare an independent Israeli plan of action as well.

The Israeli government must ensure there are no further surprises regarding the US policy on Iran. The US approval of the interim deal and the resulting acknowledgment of Iran as a nuclear threshold nation in the framework of a final agreement forces Israel to change its strategy and demonstrate flexibility

in order to maintain its strategic objective. However, Israel must make it clear that it cannot bend beyond that point. Israel must adopt “strategic flexibility” as a response to Iran’s “heroic flexibility” and the interim deal signed between Iran and the West. Despite the altered international climate following the interim deal – indeed, precisely because of it – one issue remains crucial: Israeli-US coordination and a very high degree of trust between the nations’ leaders as a prerequisite for the success of Israel’s strategy.

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