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Iran is Falling into a Nuclear Agreement Trap

By

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As it appears, using the strategy of coercive diplomacy, the United States and the European Union have been successful to force the clerics in Tehran to dismantle the vital parts of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Coercive diplomacy possesses three elements, a demand, a threat, and time pressure.¹ To apply this strategy, the US and EU have imposed a set of economic sanctions along with threats of force while negotiating to dismantle Iran's nuclear facilities by an urgent deadline. The primary contender, the United States, has taken advantage of its position of power to impose its will on a weak developing nation ruled by a clerical regime. It wants to block the progress of a nation in an important advanced technology by interfering in the country's energy policy. Since coming to the office on February 17, 2015, the US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, has threatened to use bunker-busting bombs to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities.² His predecessor Chuck Hagel had advocated direct negotiations with Iran and opposed military strikes, however under pressures by Israel Lobby, he resigned in mid-November 2014.

After Iran's investing \$40 to \$200 billion in its nuclear energy infrastructure, suffering assassinations of 5 nuclear scientists, and undergoing a covert war which sabotaged its nuclear facilities,³ the clerics in Tehran have tentatively accepted to comply with the US demands. The Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had said earlier, he would tactically make a heroic retreat (narmesh ghahramananeh) to see how the US would respond. But his retreat happened to be fatal as he was forced to remove his red lines and agree to effectively dismantling all important elements of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Moreover, Iran will suffer further costs of de-installation, storage, and other heavy outlays later on. Jeffery D. Sachs, a development economist at Columbia University, called the deal "an important achievement in global diplomacy".⁴ He did not say why a poor country like Iran should forego its enormous investments to please the rich West. Sachs' advice has made the developing countries more dependent and worse off than they were before.

The "Framework" of Understanding

The US – Iran face-to-face negotiations started secretly in 2012, and an interim agreement was reached in Geneva on 24 November 2013, named the Joint Plan of Action.⁵ Under that agreement, Iran received some minor sanctions relief. After some further rounds of negotiations, the Islamic regime agreed to a tentative "framework" of understanding in Lausanne, Switzerland.⁶ On April 2, 2015, the US Secretary of State John Kerry announced the major parameters of the "framework" at a press conference in Lausanne. The parameters are as follows:

Key Factors for Effectively Dismantling Iran's Nuclear Facilities

Parameters	Brief Descriptions
Enrichment	About two –thirds of Iran's 19,000 centrifuges are dismantled, 97% of its 10,000 kg enriched uranium will be destroyed, and Iran will not be able to enrich uranium more than 3.67% for at least 15 years.
Fordow Facility	Iran no longer will enrich uranium or conducts research and development for enrichment at Fordow for at least 15 years, cannot have any fissile materials, and removes all centrifuges at the site.
Natanz Facility	Iran will use only 5060 of its old generation centrifuges at Natanz for ten years and removes its advanced centrifuges and stores them for ten years.
Inspection and Transparency	IAEA inspectors will have regular access to all Iran's nuclear facilities, including supply chains, uranium mines, and yellowcake production for 25 years. Iran has agreed to implement the IAEA's Additional Protocol for greater access to its nuclear facilities.
Reactors and Reprocessing	Iran agrees to destroy the core of its heavy water reactor in Arak and redesign and rebuild a new one to P5+1 satisfaction. Iran will ship its spent nuclear fuels out of the country and will not conduct any research and development on the spent materials, and will not build any additional heavy water reactor for 15 years.
Sanctions	If Iran abides by its commitments, it will receive sanctions relief. After Iran took all of the key nuclear related steps, the US and EU nuclear-related sanctions will be suspended, but can be snapped back in case of Iran's non-compliance. After the above steps were implemented the UNSC resolution sanctions on Iran will be lifted.
Phasing	For ten years, Iran will limit its enrichment capacity to ensure a breakout timeline (the time it takes to acquire enough fissile materials for a nuclear bomb) of at least one year. Important inspections will continue well beyond 15 years.

Source: US Department of State⁷

Later in the day, President Barack Obama repeated the parameters and said "Since Iran's Supreme Leader has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, this framework gives Iran the opportunity to verify that its program is, in fact, peaceful."⁸ Obama had also used the word fatwa, an Islamic edict in the hands of the clerics, on March 19, 2015, in his message to Iranians celebrating the Persian New Year, Nowruz.⁹ He said "Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, and President Rouhani has said that Iran would never develop a nuclear weapon."¹⁰ Obama's use of the word fatwa implied he is directly dealing with the top clerics in Tehran. The country that itself has separated religion from its own government does not hesitate to use religion as a means to promote its political goals. Obama ignored that clerics have issued fatwa to kill many political prisoners at home and dissidents abroad. The word fatwa was popularized when Ayatollah Rohollah Khomeini issued fatwa on February 14, 1989, to kill Salman Rushdie, the author of "Satanic Verses".

The One-sided Concessions

The proposed agreement is a one-sided acceptance of all major demands forced on Iran by the primary contender, the United States. The regime has agreed to abide by all articles listed in the agreement for

10 to 25 years. Based on this agreement, the main parts of Iran's nuclear facilities in Fordow and Arak are effectively dismantled. Only very limited enrichment will be done at Natanz nuclear site, which is vulnerable to be bombed. Iran has to destroy the core of its Heavy Water reactor and convert it to a Light Water reactor to the US satisfaction. It must ship its spent nuclear fuels out of the country for the life time of the reactor. That means, the negotiations over the past several years have been useless, since whatever the United States had wanted was forced on Iran.

Under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, Iran has the right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and NPT does not prohibit enriching uranium to nearly 20%, which is required for Tehran reactor. Under proposed agreement, Iran will have a useless nuclear program. It cannot produce higher enriched uranium for its Tehran reactor, and neither can produce enough nuclear fuel for its planned nuclear power plants. Also, Iran will lose its nuclear deterrent capability if it is attacked by the countries that possess nuclear weapons. Moreover, this agreement invites interventions and supervisions in Iran's nuclear energy policy for at least a quarter of century. The US determines Iran's nuclear activities and the size of its nuclear facilities. As Kerry said "there will be no sunset to the deal we are working to finalize....The parameters of this agreement will be implemented in phases. Some provisions will be in place for 10 years; others will be in place for 15 years; others still will be in place for 25 years."¹¹

The top clerics Ali Khamenei and Hassan Rouhani have accepted all US dictated orders. This framework most likely will be the actual agreement the clerics have accepted and prepare to sign it with its details and attachments by June 30, 2015. This becomes a bilateral agreement; the US tacitly protects the regime in exchange for the clerics to promote the US interests in the region. The agreement will be a formal treaty with the US government as the US Congress has to also review and approve it within 30 days if it is finalized. It will be strengthened to an international treaty imposed on Iran, when it goes to the United Nations Security Council. The proposed agreement is under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which means if Iran does not abide by the UNSC resolutions, military force can be used against it under Article 42 of the Charter. By linking the agreement to Chapter VII, Iran is fallen to a trap of having admitted that it wanted to build nuclear weapons and thus prepares the ground for future military attacks on a pretext of non-compliance.

What is agreed on secretly has been already implemented. According to Behrooz Kamalvandi, the speaker of Iran's Atomic Organization, during the past two and a half years, major elements of the Additional Protocol have been mostly implemented.¹² That means Rouhani's government has bypassed the Majles and has implemented the Protocol. Tehran's Mayor, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf who had visited the nuclear facilities in February had said all facilities in Fordow have been dismantled and scientists do not dare to even get close to them. Ghalibaf accused Zarif of completing the negotiations without disclosing its details. He believes Zarif's conduct of foreign policy is traitorous to the country.

Dissents Flared Up After the Agreement

Rouhani had planned to control dissents in advance by misinforming the public about the agreement. An hour before the joint press conference by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and

European Union Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini, in Lausanne, the Foreign Ministry had distributed a Fact Sheet in Persian in which some important words and phrases of the agreement had been either eliminated or changed to fool the Iranians.

Afterward, Rouhani made a speech broadcasted from State TV on April 3, saying “the deal benefits everyone”. On the same day, the government promoted the deal at Friday’s prayer. The cleric Mohammad Emami Kashani who gave the sermon praised the deal and congratulated the negotiators. Other top officials, including Hassan Firouzabadi, the head of Arms forces and Mohammad Ali Jafari, head of the Revolutionary Guards, Ali Larijani, the head of the parliament, and his brother Sadegh Larijani, the head of judiciary, all endorsed the deal. That meant the regime top leaders had all accepted the deal.

Nevertheless, dissents flared up instantly in the Iranian media outlets after the faked Fact Sheet was released by the Foreign Ministry. On April 7, when Zarif presented the framework to the parliament, some Majles members criticized the concessions he had made. An argument occurred between Zarif and Javad Karimi-Ghodousi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majles. He scolded Zarif for conceding on future enrichment at Fordow and Natanz. The argument heated up to the point that security guards had to force out the reporters from the Majles floor.¹³ On that day, some students from Tehran University demonstrated in front of the parliament questioning the foreign minister why he had ignored the red lines. Also protests erupted in Shiraz when Rouhani visited the city few days later.

Mock Fights over the Deal

While the clerics have agreed on the deal with the US, there are mock fights between the US and Iranian officials over the economic sanctions. The agreement says the US, EU, and UN sanctions will be suspended after signing the agreement, which means they could be reinstated at a later time. In reality, the sanctions on Iran have reached to a point of diminishing returns, which means their continuation will cost the US and EU more than the damages they inflict on Iran’s economy. For that reason, the European countries are anxious to lift the sanctions because their economies are in recession. In July 2012 under the US pressures they had unwillingly joined the sanctions.¹⁴ Also the US economy has been in stagnation since the recession in 2007-2009 and lifting the sanctions will generate substantial business for the US companies. More oil from Iran will lower oil prices benefiting major oil importing countries, mainly the US and European countries. Therefore lifting the sanctions is not the real issue, it is a mock fight. Another mock fight is between the White House and the United States Congress over details of the deal. If the deal becomes a formal agreement, Iran’s main nuclear facilities are effectively dismantled, thus the details of the deal are not real issues.

Reminiscence of a Colonial Era Agreement

While the regime leaders pretended that they had made a good agreement, Lausanne deal is a shameful agreement in Iran’s contemporary history. The agreement can be compared with the 1919 agreement under the Qajar king Ahmad Shah. The then British Foreign Secretary; Earl (George) Curzon wanted to formally incorporate Iran into the British Empire domain. On August 9, 1919, Curzon proposed an

agreement known as the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919, under which Britain would provide Iran with a loan, and appoint advisers to the army and other vital organs of the Iranian government at Iran's expense.¹⁵ The then prime minister Hassan Vosogh-eldoleh and two of his cabinet members received bribes from the British to sign the agreement. The Agreement was widely viewed as establishing a British military and economic protectorate over Iran. The agreement aroused considerable oppositions from the US and France; the underlying reason was not to let Britain gain political monopoly over Iran and its oil resources¹⁶ The agreement was not recognized by the League of Nations. The agreement was never approved by the Iranian parliament as it was required by the constitution.

Since the military interventions have not been successful to dominate the oil-rich Iraq and Libya, the Western powers have backed Rouhani's government to repress oppositions in Iran and prepare the ground for the West to expand domination over Iran. If the deal becomes a formal agreement or treaty, the Western powers will succeed to bring Iran under their full domination to plunder its oil resources and benefit from its educated labor force.

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¹ Alexander L. George, Forceful persuasion: coercive diplomacy as an alternative to war.

² <http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2015/04/u-s-defense-secretary-might-bomb-iran-even-peace-agreement-signed.html>

³ Akbar E. Torbat, The Confrontation with Iran: A Covert War, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article30305.htm>

⁴ Jeffery D. Sachs, <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/dont-let-hard-liners-in-us-iran-israel-block-chance-for-peace-2015-04-23>

⁵ Akbar E Torbat, *Iran yields to the West's demands*, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/MID-01-061213.html

⁶ Press Conference, John Kerry, Secretary of State, Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland, April 2, 2015 <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/04/240196.htm>

⁷ Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/04/240170.htm>

⁸ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/04/02/statement-president-framework-prevent-iran-obtaining-nuclear-weapon>

⁹ Nowruz is non-religious celebrations in the entire greater Iran which encompass all nations have inherited the legacy of Iranian culture.

¹⁰ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/19/remarks-president-obama-nowruz>

¹¹ <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/04/240196.htm>

¹² Young Journalist Club, <http://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/5183252>

¹³ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/04/iran-lausanne-framework-zarif-defend.html#ixzz3Y5gLXQSi>

¹⁴ Akbar E. Torbat, EU Embargoes Iran over the Nuke Issue,

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article31795.htm>

¹⁵ Nasrollah Saifpour Fatemi, *Diplomatic History of Persia*, text of the agreement pp. 11-12.

¹⁶ Rouhollah Ramazani, *the Foreign Policy of Iran*, p. 165.