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The experts assess the Iran agreement of 2015

John Mecklin

After serially breaking a variety of self-imposed deadlines, six world powers and Iran reached agreement on plans for long-term limits on the Iranian nuclear program and the easing of international economic sanctions on that country. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany (or P5+1) and Iran signed off on the complex agreement, more than 80 pages in length, Tuesday in Vienna. Negotiations were slowed for days by disagreements about the timing of sanctions relief, the degree of access international inspectors would gain to Iranian military sites, and, particularly, a UN ban on conventional weapons sales to Iran, which includes a ban on ballistic missile-related transactions.

The agreement reached this week places restrictions on a broad array of Iranian nuclear activities—including uranium enrichment and plutonium separation—and calls for the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor the country's nuclear sites. The restrictions and monitoring regime aim to prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons. As the restrictions take effect, a complex regimen of economic sanctions against Iran will start to be unwound.

The agreement will almost certainly face contentious US congressional review and heated debate around the world. The *Bulletin* has asked top international security experts with a variety of perspectives and backgrounds to offer their assessments of the agreement. Their comments will be published over the course of several days, as they have time to study the complex, lengthy, and unprecedented document.



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John Mecklin is the editor of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Previously, Mecklin was editor-in-chief of *Miller-McCune* (since renamed *Pacific Standard*), an award-...

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Sharon Squassoni, director and senior fellow, Proliferation Prevention Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies

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Lawrence Korb and Katherine Blakeley, senior fellow and policy analyst (respectively), Center for American Progress

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Kingston Reif, Director for Disarmament and Threat Reduction Policy, Arms Control Association

14 JULY 2015



After nearly two years of intense and at times tumultuous negotiations, the so-called P5+1 group of world powers (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, plus Germany) and Iran have reached a long-term, comprehensive agreement to limit Iran's sensitive nuclear activities and ensure that it cannot acquire nuclear weapons.

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Many observers, including this author, doubted whether such an agreement could be reached. While a final judgment on the deal must await its implementation, what has been achieved to date is remarkable and historic.

The deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, would verifiably block Iran's pathways to nuclear weapons development—the uranium-enrichment route and the plutonium-separation route—and guard against a clandestine weapons program. The agreement is consistent with, and in some ways stronger than, the framework announced April 2.

The agreement is not perfect. Both sides had to make adjustments to their opening positions. But each side got what they needed, and when implemented, the agreement will be a net plus for nonproliferation and will enhance US and regional security.

Despite these benefits, critics say the United States got a raw deal. They argue that the United States made all the concessions, the agreement is a starting pistol for a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, and more pressure would convince Iran to dismantle its nuclear program. Some have also expressed concern that the United States gave up too much in allowing the UN Security Council Resolution arms embargo and ballistic missile sanctions on Iran to sunset after 5 and 8 years, respectively.

These arguments don't hold up.

First, it's clear that Tehran had to retreat from many of its initial demands, including in the areas of the scale of uranium enrichment it needed, the intrusiveness of inspections it would tolerate, and the pace of sanctions relief it would demand. Second, while some of Iran's Sunni Arab rivals are nervous about the agreement and have announced plans to pursue their own nuclear energy programs, the long-term, verifiable restrictions the deal places on Iran's sensitive nuclear activities should greatly reduce the incentive of other states in the region to match Iran's nuclear capabilities.

Third, there is no viable strategy to secure a "better deal." The agreement will keep Iran further away from the ability to make nuclear weapons for far longer than the alternative of additional sanctions or a military strike possibly could.

Finally, it's important to remember that the UN sanctions related to arms and ballistic missiles were put in place because of Iran's nuclear program. The resolutions make it clear that these sanctions would be suspended when Iran resolved concerns about its nuclear program. Retaining the sanctions on ballistic missiles for 8 years and the arms embargo for 5 years is an important achievement that would also provide additional leverage to ensure Iran complies with its obligations under the agreement.

As Congress now turns to reviewing the deal, it has a solemn responsibility to weigh the deal on its merits and not according to the dictates of partisan politics. The consequences of preventing the United States from living up to its end of the bargain would leave Iran closer to a nuclear weapon and increase the risk of war.

Siegfried S. Hecker, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University

14 JULY 2015



Ambassador Seyed Hossein Mousavian, research scholar and former diplomat, Princeton University

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pfbonney • a day ago

I guess we are really supposed to be thankful that Obama didn't give the Iranians one of our TRIDENT II submarines fully equipped with 24 nuclear-armed missiles, to incentivize the Iranians to quit their quest for nuclear weapons.

Conspicuously absent from the above assessments are any that

concerning the agreement. Obviously, comments were selected only from those people who are of the belief that a bad deal is better than no deal.

And as such, further confirms the American political right's belief the political left wants ONLY the West to disarm.

For those not familiar with the issue, it was the left, led by Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, that gave the Soviet Union the bomb, stealing the design from the United States. Then, once the Soviets had successfully detonated their first atomic bomb, the left started protesting ONLY the West's nuclear weapons, emphasizing the need to engage in nuclear disarmament, which, of course, would leave all the non-western, anti-American countries with nuclear arms. (Do THOSE countries succeed in

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boonteetan • 2 days ago

The deal has finally arrived. Curb of nuclear activities in exchange for sanction relief, that is the nutshell of deal. Nothing concrete as yet, US congress has to approve first. Also, how would IAEA carry out its supervision on Tehran effectively? Could Israel sit quietly? Will Saudi not react?

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David Szabo • 2 days ago

Peace is a word that has many meanings in the middle east.
 religion
 land
 energy
 you can share religion

 you can share land

 you can share energy
 only then can you have peace
 middle east is swimming with money that can be used for the benefit of all

 better life better homes more water more food
 Israel has turned the desert into a breadbasket to feed it,s people
 that knowledge can be shared

 and energy from uranium must be phased out and oil as well
 the sun is abounded in the middle east Saudi Arabia is already starting on this venture

 as for Iran it is a strong hold for the right,s of humanety but you will not get it with force only allah can do that it is true that we have the messangers of good that come to us from the Creator he is known by many names let us hope we can show him that we can live in Peace and he will forgive us because we are after all his children

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hans • 2 days ago

the next world war is coming thanks to idiots that call themself educated. well i am not but war and reading about war is a big hobby. Iran is the biggest sponsor of terror against Israel and the west. So thinking this averds war is stupid.

Saudi Arabia is seeking nukes through Russia, that looks for money. So "peace" is nothing but a word on paper.

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Gunnar Westberg • 2 days ago

REJOICE - WITH TREPIDATION.

Gunnar Westberg

How I would like to say: Peace is saved! I would like to go out in the summer evening and sing: Blessed be the steps of the peacemakers.

I will do so. Yes, I will.

But there are fears in the recesses of my mind. Is the deal really safe from the warmakers in the US Senate? It ought to be because if they say No, the rest of the world is likely to go on and stick to the deal, and the US would be the great loser, losing trade and influence. But I do not know what tricks the US senators may have up the sleeve. After all, their defeat will be difficult to bear.

And Netanyahu, what can he do? He will look for ways to make it seem that Iran is about to attack Israel. There are ways to produce subterfuge. Groups under Israeli influence may kill Israeli diplomats or blow up a building in Israel. Israeli terrorists could launch an attack on a US embassy, or a US passenger plane, making it look as an attack from Iran.

I do hope my fears will not come true. I do, I do, I do

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General_Chaos > Gunnar_Westberg • 2 days ago

And you have no worries about what Iran will do with sanctions relief? Might it not increase its support for the murderous Assad regime, the Quds Force, the IRGC efforts underway in several countries? This deal will hand over billions of dollars for the largest state-sponsor of terror on the planet, and a state that the IAEA last week says is still not complying with its obligations...and you are worried about the US Senate. Wow.

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pfbonney > General_Chaos • a day ago

Yeah. This guy is as gullible as they get.

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R Spitzer • 2 days ago

All this deal means with a 14 day delay between request and inspection is a Arab/Sunni Bomb.

Even if the Iranian's keep this deal and the West believes them, the Sunni Arab states are on record they expect the exact same deal.

Then the West can not control the end result in that circumstance.

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RobGoldston • 2 days ago

Indeed! Next we need an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

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pfbonney > RobGoldston • a day ago

We've already been down that road. Yassir Arafat never showed up. The Palestinians voted in Hamas only because they saw Hamas as being the most uncompromising of the candidates, not because they saw Hamas as the best administrators, e.g., keeping taxes low, attracting jobs with a living wage, establishing low-crime policies, promoting the "Lawn of the Month" awards, etc..

Besides, the last thing we need from this administration is another bad one like this one.

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RobGoldston > pfbonney • 13 hours ago

Just to be clear my point was that we need an Israeli-Palestinian agreement before we can expect to negotiate a NWFZ in the Middle East. As I understand it, this is - more or less - the position of the State of Israel. How we get to an Israeli-Palestinian agreement is another question. Got any ideas?

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pfbonney > RobGoldston • 11 hours ago

None.

While what you say is true, about that being a prerequisite for a deal, as intransigent as the Palestinians are (in view of the failed prior deal with Arafat, where he was to receive all of his stated

goals for not much in return) and as much as Israel needs security deals due to her precarious situation, I'm thinking the whole thing is a lost cause.

The chain of events have already been set in motion for some degree of calamity. Let's hope not nuclear.

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