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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
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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-winning magazine.

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INVITED EXPERT COMMENTARY

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

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

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

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This roughly 100-page agreement, meticulously crafted by the tireless and sagacious diplomats of Iran and the P5+1, represents a milestone achievement in the cause of non-proliferation. This deal ensures a fully transparent Iranian nuclear program in a verifiable way, adopts new sets of measures guaranteeing there can be no diversion towards weaponization in Iran, acknowledges Iran's right to enrich uranium on its soil for peaceful purposes, and secures the removal of the draconian sanctions regime imposed on Iran.

Furthermore, this deal serves as a model for how to address future proliferation challenges throughout the world. A template has been created for how countries can develop nuclear energy programs without eliciting concern that they may develop nuclear weapons. Several principles can be enshrined into international non-proliferation law based on this agreement, including ceasing the production of plutonium and the separation of plutonium, halting the production of highly enriched uranium, and prohibiting the stockpiling beyond peaceful domestic needs of nuclear fuel.

Broader steps that can also be taken after the implementation of this agreement include establishing a nuclear-weapons-free zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East, a longtime goal of Iran. The Middle East is already in an incredibly volatile state, and the possession of nuclear weapons by any power only serves to exacerbate instability and tension throughout the region. There is a clearly an urgent need for the establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East, and this nuclear agreement sets a positive precedent in this regard.

This diplomatic agreement also marks a major step towards decreasing tensions and hostility between Iran and the United States. It can be used as a starting point to address other areas of conflict between the two nations, specifically on issues related to regional rivalries and security-related issues such as terrorism. Iran and the United States both stand to benefit immensely from increased cooperation with one another. By compromising on the nuclear issue, the door is opened.

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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 condemn the agreement. Obviously, comments were solicited 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

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.

2 △ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›



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 seems

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

△ | ▾ • Reply • Share ›



General Chaos > Gunnar Westberg • 2 days ago

And you have no worries about what Iran will do with sanctions

relief? Might it not increase it 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.

2   • Reply • Share ›



RobGoldston • 2 days ago

Indeed! Next we need an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

1   • Reply • Share ›



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?

1   • Reply • Share ›



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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