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Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies  
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Solution to Iranian nuclear dossier & its role on the  
Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass  
Destruction (MEWMDFZ)

Seyed Hossein Mousavian



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## **Abstract**

Over a decade of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and Germany) have failed. The window for a diplomatic resolution will be most opportune during the second term of President Obama and the election of moderate Iranian president Hassan Rouhani. They have both voiced their readiness for a diplomatic resolution to the current standoff. There is, however, a risk that if the current US/Western policy of pressure politics continues, we will inch toward a military confrontation. In a broader sense, the outcome of the nuclear negotiations will have a profound impact on nuclear non-proliferation, Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) and Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East. The proposed paper will examine the prospects for a breakthrough in nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1. A negotiated settlement will be based on the framework of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), with measures to address key demands from all parties involved. For the P5+1, this includes transparency and verification over the nature of Iranian nuclear program, ensuring there will be no breakout capability. For the Iranians, their main demand includes recognition of their rights under the NPT, including enrichment and lifting sanctions. Any negotiated settlement on the Iranian nuclear file will inevitably introduce modified and newly formulated measures and technical modalities, which will enhance non-proliferation efforts. These milestones will pave the way to strengthen the call for concerted efforts to realize the WMDFZ in the Middle East.

## **Keywords**

WMD Free Zone in the Middle East, NPT, Iran, sanctions





## Introduction

The US laid the foundation of a nuclear Iran in the 1960s. This nuclear cooperation agreement passed by the US and the Shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in 1957 was part of President Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program. In the 1970s, the US encouraged Iran to build 23 nuclear power plants over 20 years. In 1967, the US built the first Iranian nuclear facility, Tehran Research Reactor (TRR).<sup>1</sup> In this period, Europeans were fiercely competing with the Americans to win lucrative projects to nuclearize Iran.

Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, however, Iran decided to forgo the ambitious nuclear and military projects of the US and the Shah. The West responded by violating the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and withdrawing from all agreements and contracts—costing Iran billions of dollars. The United States and European countries even opposed Iran having civilian nuclear plant and pressed Germany to decline its contractual agreement to complete the only Iranian civilian nuclear plant at Bushehr.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the West prevented Iran from having access to the international market for nuclear fuel, at a time when Iran had no plans to have uranium-enrichment activities on its own soil.

Iran had signed a contract with French company, Eurodif, for a joint venture to enrich uranium on French soil and supply fuel to the TRR and Bushehr.<sup>3</sup> Iran had paid \$1.2 billion to the French company, but under US pressure, the French pulled out of the deal. Right after the revolution, Iran even paid the US to supply fuel for TRR; instead the US neither supplied the fuel nor returned the money paid.<sup>4</sup> The West, by denying the rights of Iran to peaceful nuclear program, gave the greatest impetus for Iran to press for self-sufficiency by completing unfinished projects and ensuring domestic supply of reactor fuel in the future.

In 2002, Iran mastered enrichment and the West once again began denying the legal and legitimate rights of Iran under the NPT.<sup>5</sup> In October 2003, right after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) passed the first resolution on Iran's nuclear program, the EU3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) joined nuclear talks with Iran. The history of Iran's nuclear program suggests the West's application of double standards.

From 2003 to August 2005, when I was a member of nuclear negotiation team, Tehran made far-reaching overtures on transparency and confidence building measures, ensuring the non-diversion of Iran's nuclear program toward nuclear weapons. At the time, we agreed to the maximum transparency arrangements, such as the Safeguard Agreement, Subsidiary Arrangement Code 3.1 and Additional Protocol, suspended enrichment for almost two years, limited enrichment at 5% and maintained a meagre stockpile of enriched uranium.<sup>6</sup> Our efforts failed however due to the US policy of denying the legitimate rights of Iran for enrichment under the NPT.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/timeline-irans-nuclear-activities>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nti.org/facilities/184/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2006\\_01-02/JANFEB-IranEnrich](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2006_01-02/JANFEB-IranEnrich)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20121213/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/timeline-irans-nuclear-activities>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeairan/eu\\_iran14112004.shtml](http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iaeairan/eu_iran14112004.shtml)

<sup>7</sup> Article IV of the NPT states, "Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty."

During president Ahmadinejad's tenure (2005-2013), the nuclear negotiations continued with the P5+1 countries. Throughout this period, both sides reiterated that diplomacy is the best means for resolving the nuclear dispute, yet nuclear negotiations failed in the absence of a realistic package.

The recent victory of a moderate president in Iran, Hassan Rouhani, opens a new window for a diplomatic resolution during the second term of President Obama. However, this requires new thinking in Washington, one that distances from the continued failed policy of coercion. "My view is that if you have both a credible threat of force, combined with a rigorous diplomatic effort, that, in fact you can strike a deal," stated president Obama.<sup>8</sup> This is the actual US perception on a major foreign policy challenge—*how to deal with Iran?* Regrettably, every time the Iranians demonstrate cooperation and positive overtures, the US concludes that this is the result of pressures.

Furthermore, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu set four conditions for the US to accept a possible nuclear deal: 1) Iran halts enriching uranium, 2) Iran removes existing stockpile of enriched uranium, 3) Iran closes the enrichment facility in Qom and finally 4) it stops producing plutonium [which can be used for nuclear weapons]. "Until all four of these measures are achieved, the pressure on Iran must be increased and not relaxed, and certainly not eased," Netanyahu said.<sup>9</sup> He reiterated his belief that all diplomatic efforts must be accompanied by a "credible military threat."

The Israeli and US language of threat and intimidation is not conducive toward settling the Iranian nuclear file. Regrettably, this language is even used when Iran plays a constructive role in addressing proliferation risks—particularly in the Syrian case. Iran and Russia joined forces to convince the Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and avert yet another US war in the Middle East.<sup>10</sup> Yet, President Obama in response stated that "Iran should avoid thinking that the United States would not launch a military strike in response to Tehran's nuclear program just because it has not attacked Syria. They shouldn't draw a lesson that we haven't struck, to think we won't strike Iran."<sup>11</sup>

The crux of the matter is that the US has attempted to use the nuclear issue as an opportunity to unite the international community against Iran. The aim is to heighten pressures and sanctions as a means to force Iran to forego its peaceful nuclear enrichment program, ultimately leading to regime change. On the other hand, while US-Iran disputes go beyond the nuclear issue, Iran has seized this opportunity to resist U.S. bullying policy and unite the nation around the flag.<sup>12</sup> Particularly since the nuclear issue for the Iranians is a matter of national consensus and pride.

While there are clear challenges ahead, there should be no doubt that a peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear program would create a model for assuring no other member state of the NPT would ever divert nuclear activities toward weaponization. Progress on this issue, therefore, will have a profound impact on nuclear non-proliferation, Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) and Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East.

## The Failed Policies

Rather than a genuine diplomacy, the West has been focusing on coercion in its approach—sanctions, sabotage, and assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists. Some observers in the West have made the argument that during President Ahmadinejad's tenure, the West was provoked to resort to ever-more

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/15/us-syria-crisis-usa-idUSBRE98D09C20130915>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/israel-urges-international-community-to-step-up-pressure-on-iran/2013/09/17/5fad1bae-1f7a-11e3-9ad0-96244100e647\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/israel-urges-international-community-to-step-up-pressure-on-iran/2013/09/17/5fad1bae-1f7a-11e3-9ad0-96244100e647_story.html)

<sup>10</sup> <http://world.time.com/2013/09/13/russia-iran-hail-syrias-move-to-sign-weapons-pact/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/15/us-syria-crisis-usa-idUSBRE98D09C20130915>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.kaleme.com/1390/08/19/klm-79696/>

coercive pressures. Yet, the US president renewed military strike's option against Iran right after a moderate president, Hassan Rouhani, was elected and the new Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif took reconciliatory steps, including the recognition that the Holocaust was a historical fact, condemning the killing of Jews by Nazis and congratulating the Jews for their new year, Rosh Hashanah.<sup>13</sup> Iran's response to the P5 + 1 threats has been to continue forward with its uranium enrichment program and reach a point of no return, compelling the West to negotiate on an equal footing with the Iranians. I believe all options have been practically and carefully examined—except a realistic, face saving and comprehensive package for a peaceful settlement.

*WikiLeaks* provided a great deal of insight into the secret discussions on a possible military strike against Iran. The king of Saudi Arabia urged the US to “cut off the head of the snake,”<sup>14</sup> i.e. encouraging the US to attack Iran and put an end to its nuclear program. The message was clear and well understood by Washington—the Saudis and their allies want to “fight the Iranians until the last American standing.”<sup>15</sup> While Israel maintains the same position, the former Mossad Director Meir Dagan in 2007 told a US official “Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf States all fear Iran, but want someone else to do the job for them.”<sup>16</sup>

Lindsey Graham, a leading Republican senator on defense issues, said that the U.S. should consider sinking the Iranian navy, destroying its air force, and delivering a decisive blow to the Revolutionary Guard to “neuter” the regime, destroying its ability to fight back, and hope that Iranians would use the opportunity to rise up against the government.<sup>17</sup> Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has always pushed the United States to attack Iran. “Take military actions to stop Iran's burgeoning nuclear program instead of waiting for US self-inflicted sanctions to actually force the oil-rich Middle country halt its own nuclear program” said Netanyahu.<sup>18</sup> With no exception, all top ranking officials in the Obama Administration have reiterated that, in dealing with Iran's nuclear program, ‘all options’ remain on the table, including that of a military strike.<sup>19</sup>

White House decision-makers consider military strike as a possible last resort and are hoping that the pressure Iran faces today will compel a change in its behavior and that, if not, then they would consider the military option more seriously.<sup>20</sup> “At this point, we believe that the combination of economic and diplomatic sanctions that have been placed on Iran have had a serious impact... It's the best way I believe to ultimately weaken this nation, so that ultimately they have to make a decision about whether they continue to be a pariah or whether they decide to join the international community,” former US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said.<sup>21</sup>

Threatening Iran has proved counterproductive to date and will continue to be the case as long as Tehran refuses to compromise under threat. The marred history and lack of trust between the two sides will also risk derailing any US offer for engagement. There is a possibility that if diplomacy fails, it

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/09/05/219309978/iran-s-president-tweeted-jews-a-happy-rosh-hashanah-or-did-he>

<sup>14</sup> Wikileaks, 08RIYADH649. <http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2008/04/08RIYADH649.html>

<sup>15</sup> Wikileaks, 10PARIS174. <http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2010/02/10PARIS174.html>

<sup>16</sup> Wikileaks, 07TELAVIV2280. <http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2007/07/07TELAVIV2280.html>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/06/lindsey-graham-calls-for-strike-on-iran\\_n\\_779997.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/06/lindsey-graham-calls-for-strike-on-iran_n_779997.html)

<sup>18</sup> <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE95F03720130616?irpc=932>

<sup>19</sup> Survival, Rethinking Iran, Robert E. Hunter, September 29, 2010

<sup>20</sup> “Ross talks Iran, Israel with AIPAC”, October 25, 2010, Politico. [http://www.politico.com/blogs/laurarozen/1010/Ross\\_talks\\_Iran\\_Israel\\_with\\_AIPAC.html#](http://www.politico.com/blogs/laurarozen/1010/Ross_talks_Iran_Israel_with_AIPAC.html#)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/panetta-military-strike-would-delay-iranian-nuclear-project-by-no-more-than-two-years-1.399371>

will ultimately lead to heightened tensions, a possible all-out-war and force Iran to withdraw from the NPT.<sup>22</sup>

The negative impacts of sanctions on the Iranian economy are undisputable. The sanction regime on Iran is expansive, consisting of unilateral, multilateral and United Nations Security Council [UNSC] resolutions.<sup>23</sup> With the adoption of UNSC resolution 1929, coupled with US unilateral sanctions and pressing other countries to follow suit [including EU members, Japan, South Korea, and Australia], international business with Iran has dramatically diminished.<sup>24</sup> During Ahmadinejad's presidency, due to sanctions and mismanagement, Iran's currency lost roughly half its value,<sup>25</sup> with inflation reaching above 40% in 2013.<sup>26</sup>

The sanctions policy is one component of US coercive policy toward Iran. For years, Washington has launched covert operations against Iran, believing it would be more effective and less risky than an overt war.<sup>27</sup> In 2010, John Sawers, the UK's intelligence service chief, publically advocated for "intelligence-led approach to stop Iran's nuclear proliferation."<sup>28</sup> In January 2011, it was revealed that president Obama accelerated cyber-attacks against the Iranian nuclear program,<sup>29</sup> where several Iranian nuclear scientists were assassinated.<sup>30</sup> The results, however, have once again proven counterproductive, with the cyber war making Tehran more determined than ever to expand its nuclear efforts. IAEA reports prior to covert operation against Iranian nuclear facilities show that Iran had one uranium enrichment site, a pilot plant of 164 centrifuges enriching uranium at a level of 3.5%, one generation of centrifuges and an approximately 100 kg stockpile of enriched uranium. Today, it has two enrichment sites with roughly 18,000 centrifuges, can enrich uranium up to 20%, possesses a new generation of centrifuges and has amassed a stockpile of more than 8,000 kg of enriched uranium.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, following the cyber-attacks, Iran is now the fourth biggest cyber power among the world's cyber armies.<sup>32</sup>

## Iran's Options

Without a doubt, Iran's main objective is to resolve the nuclear dilemma through a peaceful solution—no other option is optimal for the country or the international community. The other option would be for Iran to forgo its enrichment program, which would be a political suicide for any Iranian politician—a move that is out of the question. The third option could be to tolerate the current sanctions and other punitive measures and continue defying the western demands. This option is unsustainable for Iran and the US, particularly since Washington maintains time is running out on the nuclear negotiations.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew Bunn, "Beyond Zero Enrichment," Policy Brief, Belfer Center, John F. Kennedy School, Harvard.

<sup>23</sup> Strategic Implications of the Iranian Nuclear Program, Aspen European Strategy Forum Berlin, 22-24 September 2010.

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.niacouncil.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=6719&security=1&news\\_iv\\_ctrl=-1](http://www.niacouncil.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=6719&security=1&news_iv_ctrl=-1)

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/23/world/middleeast/iran-currency-falls-further-on-concerns-over-bank.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/23/world/middleeast/iran-currency-falls-further-on-concerns-over-bank.html?_r=0)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Middle-East/2013/Jul-26/225114-iran-inflation-accelerates-poses-headache-for-rouhani.ashx#axzz2fIT6dTlf>

<sup>27</sup> Dov S. Zakheim, "The Military Option," Iran Primer, United States Institute of Peace, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/military-option>.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.omantribune.com/index.php?page=news&id=78707&heading=News%20in%20Details>

<sup>29</sup> David E. Sanger, "Iran Fights Malware Attacking Computers," *New York Times*, September 25, 2010, [www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/world/middleeast/26iran.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/world/middleeast/26iran.html).

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/12/world/middleeast/iran-adversaries-said-to-step-up-covert-actions.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/opinion/2013/04/iran-sanctions-consequences-list.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107141074>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2013/04/07/secretary-of-state-john-kerry-warns-iran-that-time-running-out-on-nuclear-talks/>

At the same time, Iran would not tolerate the current punitive measures, which include six United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSC);<sup>34</sup> EU and US unilateral sanctions on oil and Central Bank which is beyond the realm of the UNSC;<sup>35</sup> and intensifying cyber war.

Another proposal by renowned political theorist Kenneth Waltz suggests that the Iranian nuclear bomb would facilitate peace through “Mutual Assured Destruction” creating a balance in the Middle East.<sup>36</sup> This option may force the US and Israel to stop the notion of “all options on the table,” terminate the US regime change policy, force the US to recognize the rights of Iran for enrichment even at low level, push the West to lift all sanctions—in return for Iran dismantling the bomb and press Israel to accept Middle East free from nuclear weapons and other WMDs. This option is unlikely, particularly since Iran has maintained its nuclear program is peaceful and considers unethical and counterproductive the production, stockpile and the use of all weapons of mass destruction.

There is however another option, “neither NPT nor the nuclear bomb.” Iran could leave the NPT and all WMD treaties and instead substitute them with the Supreme Leader’s religious decree or *Fatwa*, banning all WMDs. For years Iran has been suffering from the Western policy of “*only obligations and no rights.*” Western pressures based on the excuse of obligations have resulted in an array of punitive measures. Withdrawing from the NPT, therefore, has become an increasingly attractive option within the policy decision-making circles of the country. “It is not acceptable for Iran to respect the NPT and the [IAEA] Agency’s rules, while the US and the West ignore the NPT, including its Article 6 [which underlines decreasing the number of nuclear weapons] and Article 4 [which stresses every country’s inalienable right to use the civilian nuclear technology],” adding that “all options are on the Parliament’s table”, said the Chairman of the parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi.<sup>37</sup>

Punitive measures against Iran have exceeded those placed on North Korea. The irony is that while Pyongyang withdrew from the NPT, built and tested nuclear weapons, Iran has remained committed to NPT and there is no evidence of diversion in Iranian nuclear program toward weaponization.<sup>38</sup> Moreover Western countries have forged strategic cooperation with non-NPT nuclear weapons states such as India, Pakistan and Israel.<sup>39</sup> Such policy seems to advocate that if a country is not part of the NPT and even possessed nuclear bomb, there would be no legitimate and legal grounds for using “non-compliance” as a gateway to bring the country under pressure. This precedence will weaken non-proliferation instruments and treaties.

The western double standards policy against Iran is not limited to the nuclear dossier. Since the 1979 Revolution, the discrepancy in extending rights for commitments in all WMD conventions signed onto by Iran, has been an ongoing saga. For example, Iran has been in full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) for the past 15 years since signing and ratifying.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Iran is the biggest victim of chemical weapons since the Second World War. During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) and with the full backing of the US and other western powers, Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against Iran killing and injuring 100,000 Iranians.<sup>41</sup> Yet, Iran has been denied its rights enshrined in the CWC to receive assistance in the peaceful use and technology transfer for the

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Security-Council-Resolutions-on-Iran>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS20871.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137731/kenneth-n-waltz/why-iran-should-get-the-bomb>

<sup>37</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107158720>

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/02/05/world/asia/northkorea-timeline.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/02/05/world/asia/northkorea-timeline.html?_r=0)

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003\\_12/MillerandScheinman](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_12/MillerandScheinman)

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/iran/>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/18/us-iran-talks-opportunity-reconciliation>

chemical industry. The West's policy of denying Iran has been in place prior to Tehran signing the CWC, ratifying the CWC, in its aftermath, and even during the time of nuclear dilemma.

Iran has not been able to benefit from the advantages of being member of WMD conventions and on the other side based on the Fatwa or religious decree, Iran rejects the use, acquisition and procurement of WMDs. The final option for Iran could be to provide unrestricted access to inspectors of all WMD conventions and declare its peaceful intentions based on the Fatwa and not the conventions, to ensure Iran no longer permits the West to use the NPT and other WMD conventions as a means for economic and political pressures.

### **Does Iran Seek Nuclear Weapon?**

The Iranian nuclear issue is political in nature and there is heated debate over the nature of Iran's nuclear program. On March 5<sup>th</sup> 2013, Dr. Hans Blix who was in charge of the UN's Iraq nuclear-monitoring and verification group from 2000 to 2003 and led the IAEA for 16 years said, "So far Iran has not violated the NPT and there is no evidence right now that suggests that Iran is producing nuclear weapons. The fact that Tehran has enriched uranium up to 20 per cent leads to suspicion of a secret weapons program, however, no action can be justified on mere suspicions or intentions that may not exist."<sup>42</sup> Mohammad El Baradei, the former head of IAEA from 1997 to 2009 said, "During my time at the agency, we haven't seen a shred of evidence that Iran has been weaponizing, in terms of building nuclear-weapons facilities and using enriched materials."<sup>43</sup>

It is important for the international community to understand the fact that Iran is not after any type of weapons of mass destruction. In August 2013, President Obama in a letter addressed to the President Rouhani, indicated the US is ready to resolve the nuclear issue in a way that allows Iran to demonstrate that its nuclear program is for exclusively peaceful purposes.<sup>44</sup> In an interview with NBC, Rouhani said, "Under no circumstances would we seek any weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, nor will we ever."<sup>45</sup> In a meeting with commanders of the Revolutionary Guard in September 2013, the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei stated, "We are against nuclear weapons not because of the U.S. or other countries, but because of our beliefs. And when we say no one should have nuclear weapons, we definitely do not pursue it ourselves either."<sup>46</sup>

Iran fully understands that possessing weapons of mass destruction may provide a short-term regional advantage, but would turn into longer-term vulnerability, as it would lead to a regional arms race. Instead, Iran seeks to have the sanctions lifted and be treated as equal member of the NPT—without discrimination.

### **The Way Forward**

The policy of sanctions and coercive pressure has failed in its goal of halting Iranian nuclear program. Despite all pressures and sanctions, Iran today is regionally and internationally more powerful than ever. Iran has been able to gain self-sufficiency in major civilian and military industries. Iran has reached industrial production level in conventional arms, long-range missiles, mastered uranium enrichment, and advanced peaceful chemical and biological technologies. "From what we repeatedly

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<sup>42</sup> <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/environment/iran-s-nuke-threat-is-overhyped-un-official-1.1154727>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2013/01/26/when-fact-becomes-opinion-half-truths-non-truths-and-the-pho>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Obama-tells-Rouhani-US-willing-to-allow-Iran-to-shpw-nuclear-program-is-for-peaceful-purposes-326508>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/19/iran-nuclear-weapons-rouhani>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.islamicinvitationturkey.com/2013/09/17/imam-khamenei-we-are-against-nuclear-weapons-not-because-of-the-u-s-or-other-countries-but-because-of-our-beliefs/>

observed, a policy of isolation and sanctions only served to stimulate a country's sense of national pride; in the worst case, it could make the targeted country's nuclear project a matter of national priority,"<sup>47</sup> wrote Mohamed El Baradei in his book, "The Age of Deception". He adds that the UNSC Sanctions Resolution on Iran was "a misuse of the council's authority under Chapter VII of the UN Charter."<sup>48</sup>

Been involved in Iran-West relations for three decades, I have no doubts that having President Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on board in Washington and President Rouhani, Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran Ali Shamkhani in Tehran—there is no better time for resolve the nuclear dilemma peacefully and bring an end to decades of animosity between the two countries.<sup>49</sup>

Rather than wasting their time targeting Iran's legal and legitimate right for enrichment under the NPT, the world powers should focus on transparency and confidence-building measures assuring that the Iranian nuclear program would remain peaceful forever. While no Iranian politician can risk surrendering uranium enrichment, under the leadership of President Rouhani, the road to a resolution will be more constructive. Iran's insistence on enriching uranium on its soil reflects its centuries-old determination to protect its independence. "To us, mastering the atomic fuel cycle and generating nuclear power is as much about diversifying our energy resources as it is about who Iranians are as a nation, our demand for dignity and respect and our consequent place in the world. Without comprehending the role of identity, many issues we all face will remain unresolved" wrote President Rouhani in an op-ed published by Washington Post on September 19, 2013.<sup>50</sup>

In December 2010, for the first time, the US signalled its willingness to accept Iran eventually being permitted to enrich uranium under certain conditions. During the Manama Conference on Persian Gulf Security, the then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, told the BBC, "We've told them [Iran] that they are entitled to the peaceful use of civil nuclear energy, but they haven't yet restored the confidence of the international community to the extent where the international community would feel comfortable allowing them to enrich...They can enrich uranium at some future date once they have demonstrated that they can do so in a responsible manner in accordance with international obligations."<sup>51</sup>

Having detailed knowledge about the negotiations between Iran and the P5+1, I am certain neither the US nor other members of the P5+1 have mentioned such readiness regarding enrichment in the negotiation room with the Iranians. In practice, diplomatic energy during the Obama Administration has been focused overwhelmingly on implementing of punitive sanctions—even more than in previous administrations.<sup>52</sup> The Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) of 2010 (H.R.2194) signed by President Obama in July 2010, re-establishing a ban that had been lifted by the Clinton Administration on the import of caviar, pistachios, nuts and dried fruits.<sup>53, 54</sup> Furthermore, the US pressed Europe, China and Russia to vote for the UN Security Council's 1929 resolution, ushering in the most comprehensive sanction resolution passed against Iran. The resolution

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<sup>47</sup> Mohamed ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception*, 2011: pg 113.

<sup>48</sup> Mohamed ElBaradei, *The Age of Deception*, 2011:pg 203.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/10/us-iran-security-idUSBRE9890OV20130910>

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-of-iran-hassan-rouhani-time-to-engage/2013/09/19/4d2da564-213e-11e3-966c-9c4293c47ebe\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-of-iran-hassan-rouhani-time-to-engage/2013/09/19/4d2da564-213e-11e3-966c-9c4293c47ebe_story.html)

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/03/clinton-hopes-for-iranian\\_n\\_791492.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/03/clinton-hopes-for-iranian_n_791492.html)

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.npr.org/2010/12/03/131767075/leaks-cast-doubt-over-u-s-intent-on-iran-diplomacy>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/10/sanctions-pull-rug-from-under-iran.html>

<sup>54</sup> <http://mianeh.net/article/sanctions-pull-rug-under-iran>

also fortified and expanded unilateral sanctions beyond the realm of UNSC resolutions. These punitive measures sums up the achievements of the US during nuclear talks.<sup>55</sup>

The US accelerated these hostile policies, even though Washington was completely convinced that Iran neither has decided to build a nuclear bomb nor there has been any evidence of diversion in Iranian nuclear program. Speaking at Senate committee, Director of National Intelligence General Clapper confirmed that the US intelligence community had concluded with a high level of confidence that Iran had not re-started nuclear weapons work halted in 2003.<sup>56</sup> “I hold to the assessment that Iran has not made a decision to acquire a nuclear weapon – as distinguished from a nuclear-weapon option.”<sup>57</sup>

The fact is the nuclear issue is subsidiary of Iran-US hostilities and as long as this animosity continues, the disputes over the nuclear dilemma would remain unresolved. The present engagement policy of president Obama has failed because neither Washington nor Tehran has a grand strategy—or even a road map for dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue and US-Iran relations more generally. A negotiable framework, which contains a “Comprehensive Solution Package” for these two different dimensions of the US-Iran problem, is essential. To reach a solution on the nuclear case, we need to contextualize the nuclear and other issues within a bilateral, regional, and international framework, recognizing the need to address the rapprochement between Tehran and Washington simultaneously.<sup>58</sup>

Iran and the US have common interests in the “War on Terror” against Al-Qaida. Whether they like it or not they are natural allies in Afghanistan because both capitals are seeking peace and stability in Afghanistan coupled with the safe exit of American troops in 2014. During 2001, under President Khatami, Iran and the US cooperated to overthrow the Taliban and were successful to manage a national unity government in December 2001 through Iran's involvement in the UN-sponsored talks in Bonn on the future of Afghanistan.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore Iran and the US are natural allies in Iraq and both are backing the current government in Baghdad. Indirectly Iran cooperated with the US and made the collapse of Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime possible in 2003. Finally, stability or instability from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean region and to the borders of India are directly or indirectly linked to Iran and US cooperation. Therefore in parallel to Iran and the P5+1 talks, a direct talk between Tehran and Washington is a necessity and inevitable.

### ***Roadmap: A Phased Grand Agenda.***

For the Iranians, the nuclear issue is about the legitimate rights of Iran to enrichment under the NPT, a sign of independence and defending their integrity and not building a nuclear bomb. Iran is member of all the WMD conventions, such as the CWC, BWC and the NPT.<sup>60</sup> Since 2005, there has been several lost opportunities to achieve a breakthrough in talks, these include: 2009 Swap Deal on simultaneous exchange of 3.5% stockpile for TRR fuel rods, 2010 Iran's offer to cap enrichment at 5% in return for fuel rods, 2010 Turkey-Brazil-Iran swap agreement and 2011 Iran's offer of halting 20% enrichment for TRR fuel. The Russian step-by-step proposal was the most important initiative, introduced in the summer of 2011 and welcomed by Iran, it addressed all the concerns of the P5+1—however the West

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<sup>55</sup> Remarks by Ambassador Dennis Ross, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for the Central Region, United States Institute of Peace, The Challenge of Iran – Event, December 1, 2010

<sup>56</sup> Seymour Hersh, “Iran and the Bomb,” *The New Yorker*, June 6, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear\\_program\\_of\\_Iran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_program_of_Iran)

<sup>58</sup> Ben Katcher, “Don't Let Israel Set an Artificial Clock on Negotiations,” *The Race for Iran*, 28 December 2009.

<sup>59</sup> <http://americanforeignpolicy.org/about-us/joint-statement>

<sup>60</sup> NPT, Center for Nonproliferation, Monterey Institute for International Studies; BWC, CWC, CTBT, Arms Control Association factsheets, <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/treatymembership>



declined the initiative. The proposal entailed implementing the Additional Protocol and Subsidiary Arrangement Code 3.1, limit enrichment to 5 percent, halt installation of new generation of centrifuges, limit the number of enrichment sites to one, address the IAEA's concerns on all technical ambiguities and suspend enrichment for three months.<sup>61</sup> It failed, however, because the US and the West were not prepared to reciprocate with sanction relief and recognition of Iranian rights under the NPT.

In the last round of nuclear talks between the P5+1 and former Iranian nuclear negotiation team in Almaty, the five major demands of the P5+1 were for Iran to: (1) suspend 20% uranium enrichment activities; (2) suspend Fordo enrichment facility; (3) constrain the ability of Fordo to rapidly resume 20% enrichment; (4) limit 20% enriched uranium stockpile; and (5) address IAEA demands on transparency by committing to Additional Protocol (AP), Subsidiary Arrangement Code 3.1 and provide access beyond AP to address Possible Military Dimensions (PMDs).<sup>62</sup>

Six world powers held first round of talks with the new Iranian president's nuclear negotiation team in Geneva on 15 and 16th of October 2013. Tehran shocked the world powers by presenting a new "comprehensive proposal" with capacity to make a breakthrough. After four round of talks ended in the evening of Wednesday 16th, Obama spokesman Jay Carney concluded: "We found the Iranian presentation very useful. The Iranian proposal was a new proposal with a level of seriousness and substance that we had not seen before."

The Iranian position has been well known to the world powers since 2006, Tehran has two major demands: lifting of sanctions and recognizing Iran's rights under the NPT. Therefore to achieve a peaceful resolution we need to have a package consisting of all the five major demands of the world powers and the two Iranian demands, to be implemented in a step-by-step manner with proportionate reciprocation.

I believe the following ten principles can assist both parties to strike a final deal on the Iranian nuclear dilemma:

1. NPT as a framework.
2. Step-by-step plan to demonstrate the end game to all parties.
3. Mutual confidence-building measures.
4. Proportionate reciprocity.
5. Binding commitment not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons in accordance with NPT and the religious Fatwa issued by Iranian Supreme Leader.
6. Inspection arrangements for transparency set out by the IAEA.
7. Measures assuring no breakout.
8. Reduce and eliminate sanctions.
9. Recognize Iran's right to enrich uranium for civil purposes only and in keeping with its civil programs as elaborated for the international community.
10. Cooperate with Iran on peaceful nuclear technologies based on the NPT.

The West should place greater faith in the Fatwa by Iran's Supreme Leader that prohibits the production, storage or use of nuclear weapons. Iran regards utilizing nuclear weapons as forbidden by Islam and that it is incumbent on everyone to safeguard humanity from such weapons.<sup>63</sup> Initiatives to

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<sup>61</sup> [http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Iran\\_Nuclear\\_Proposals](http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Iran_Nuclear_Proposals)

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/whats-on-the-table-at-the-almaty-nuclear-talks/274702/>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.islamicdigest.net/v8core/?p=385>

garner the support of religious leaders from the Islamic world and the UN engagement to globalize this Fatwa would be a great contribution to WMDFZ in the Middle East and beyond.

The recent use of chemical weapons in Syria, suggest that the UN Security Council should proactively pursue a WMDFZ in the Middle East. The security concerns of this conflict-ridden region, necessitates a WMDFZ to be realized. The seeds planted for creating such a zone date back to December 9, 1974, when the UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed an Iranian and Egyptian resolution calling for a Middle East NWFZ.<sup>64</sup> The zone would remain in force indefinitely and commit regional countries not to manufacture, acquire, test or possess nuclear weapons.<sup>65</sup> A key impetus for their resolution was to roll back the nuclear-weapon capabilities that Israel had developed in the late 1960s and to prevent further proliferation in the Middle East. Yet, there has been zero progress toward this goal for four decades because Israel has obstructed it repeatedly to maintain its nuclear weapons monopoly.

The world powers should also take actions to push Israel to give up its nuclear weapons and join the NPT, if not it could fuel nuclear weapons proliferation in the region for decades to come. The strategic relations of the P5, coupled with aid to Israel, India and Pakistan, which have nuclear weapons and are not parties to the NPT, while pressuring Iran, which has not acquired nuclear weapons is a clear double standard. The permanent members of the UN Security Council must move more quickly to fulfil their own NPT commitments to nuclear disarmament.

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<sup>64</sup> First Committee of the UN General Assembly resolution 3263 (XXIX), "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East," 9 December 1974.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nwfz>

## **Short Biography**

Ambassador Seyed Hossein Mousavian is a research scholar at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School and a former head of Foreign Relation Committee of Iran's National Security Council (1997-2005) and spokesman for Iran's nuclear negotiators (2003-5). His latest book is [The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: A Memoir](#), published by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.