



*Iranian Council For
Defending The Truth*



How do ICDT international experts characterize Vienna Talks?

After a five-month hiatus, representatives from Islamic Republic of Iran and the P4+1 group of countries – Britain, France, Russia, and China plus Germany – began on November 29 the seventh round of talks in Vienna to resurrect the JCPOA. At the talks, the first under President Ebrahim Raeisi, the Iranian delegation presented two detailed draft texts; one on the removal of US sanctions and the other on Iran's return to its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA. In this report, we will publish ICDT international experts' views and opinions on Vienna talks.

Contents

- 2 Talks on Reviving the JCPOA: Moving from Distrust to Trust?
Professor Heinz Gärtner
- 4 Vienna Talks Continue amid Mistrust
Professor Shireen T. Hunter
- 6 May the Vienna Talks Push Iran to Seek Completely Independent Directions?
Professor William Orman Beeman
- 8 Fragile Circumstances of Vienna Talks, Roles and Players
Eric Lob
- 10 Iran and Strong Interest in Promoting Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone
Professor Richard Anderson Falk
- 12 Biden Administration Clearly Wants Almost any Kind of Deal
Professor Donald Lee Losman
- 14 Prospect of the Vienna Talks
Prof. James D. Savage
- 16 Vienna Talks and the US Deep State: Competition between the Anti-Chinese Faction and the Israeli Lobby
Andrew Korybko
- 18 Vienna Talks: Global Chessboard behind Negotiations and Juridical Battles
Leonid Savin
- 20 Constructive Paths Forward amid Challenges
Charles Ortel
- 22 Vienna Talks: Internal and External Pressures
Professor Wyn Rees



Talks on Reviving the JCPOA: Moving from Distrust to Trust?

Professor Heinz Gärtner

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All parties to the JCPOA (China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia, United Kingdom and the USA) support in principle a revival of the JCPOA. All would benefit. The fear of nuclear proliferation would be stopped and economic relations especially of the European countries with Iran (trade and investment) would improve.

The resumption of the talks is the attempt to return to the pre-Trump situation. The JCPOA until President Trump's withdrawal worked well. If there will be no JCPOA it will be a return to the pre-JCPOA situation. This would mean suspicions about Iran's nuclear program and military threats against Iran between 2010 and 2015. If there will be no diplomatic solution, US-President Biden and Israel's Prime Minister announced a potential military option. This would destabilize the whole region. All would lose. The revival of the JCPOA can avoid this situation.

US-President Donald Trump and Israel's Prime-Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the JCPOA the "worst deal ever". A revival would prove them wrong. This is why opponents of the JCPOA are trying to introduce time and again requests that are not related to the JCPOA, like Iran's missile program or its regional "behavior". There is no arms control agreement in history that includes "behavior" or singles out only the missiles of one country. These requests would terminate the JCPOA. These issues can best addressed in different regional fora, involving all actors of the region, not only Iran.

In many ways the target of the opponents of the JCPOA is not primarily the nuclear program but Iran itself. The best response to these arguments would be a working JCPOA.

Iran has announced that it will only continue result-oriented negotiations and is not going to continue talks for talks. Definitely, the talks have to be "result-oriented". The new Iranian formula "action for action" is not that far away from the US-formula "compliance for compliance". The US will not remove "all sanctions" before Iran also takes steps itself, however. It will want to keep some leverage.

Much has been achieved in the six rounds of talks from April until June. The US-delegation conceded to lift about thousand nuclear related sanc-

tions with impact on Iranian economy. This relief would be sufficient to give Iranian economy a big boost. If this not enough for Iran and it requests that “all sanctions” should be lifted, is not only a matter of economy but also a matter of pride and dignity.

The US and the European parties will want that Iran takes simultaneous steps to roll back its nuclear advancements to the 2015 level (uranium enrichment level, enriched uranium stockpiles, modern centrifuges). The implementation needs not be done by “talk-for-talk” or step by step. It can be done with timeframe packages or packages with certain commitments. No one has to take the first step. The packages can be implemented at the same time or one after the other once both sides have met their commitments of the previous packages.

Iran’s wish to get guarantees, that the next US-president will not leave an agreement again, is understandable. Unless there would be a two-third majority in the US-Congress a president cannot give these guarantees. President Biden should give these guarantees at least for his remaining presidency, what he has not done so, yet. He could do so with presidential directives.

Iran could use the remaining time after the possible revival of the JCPOA to conclude contracts with companies that last beyond the next US-presidency. The longer the talks drag on the more time Iran loses to negotiate these contracts. It is not very likely that a next US-President will be able or even willing to terminate these contracts.

During the Trump era Europe was pretty silent about Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA. After all, it was a blow against the multilateralism, which Europe holds so dear. Also, it was a violation of international law since the JCPOA is based on the UN-Security Council Resolution 2231. European companies were afraid of the US secondary sanctions if they do business with Iran.

Europeans were not entirely inactive, however. They founded the INSTEX-mechanism which should create the opportunity to bypass US-sanctions. Unfortunately, it was hardly used by the European companies. The “blocking statute”, according to which European companies would have to pay a fine if they abide by US-extraterritorial

sanctions, has not been applied.

After all, the EU recognized its responsibility since it chairs the Joint Commission of the JCPOA and organized the new talks in Vienna in April 2021. Still, the Europeans could do much more even during the ongoing talks. They could give the guarantees to stay in the deal if the US should leave it again. It also could put pressure on the US to lift the secondary sanctions. Then Europe could play a more pro-active role and provide Iran incentives to implement a new agreement. The Europeans have not done so. On the one hand, they are still anxious not to spoil the transatlantic relations. On the other hand, it indicates that President Biden does not trust the Europeans.



Vienna Talks Continue amid Mistrust

Professor Shireen T. Hunter

Dr. Shireen T. Hunter is an independent scholar with more than fifty years of experience in international affairs as a diplomat, a think tank analyst and program director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Center for European Policy Studies, and a university professor. From 2005 to 2007 she was a senior visiting fellow at the Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding of Georgetown University, from 2007 to 2014 a visiting professor, from 2014 to July 2019 a research professor, and was instated as an ACMCU Honorary Fellow in September of 2019. She is the author and editor of 27 books and monographs.

The success of negotiation depends on whether both sides would be willing to make concessions and not insist on maximalist demands. Without major concessions the success of talks is unlikely.

It is said that Iran has taken a constructive and serious stance on the Vienna talks; for instance, it has sent a 40-member delegation to Vienna to take part in the new round of negotiation, submitted two draft proposals and reached a new agreement with the IAEA. However, in my view, the number of delegates is not necessarily a sign of seriousness. As to the new proposals, apparently, Iran's new proposals fall short of what had already been agreed upon during the Rouhani administration. What is clear is that under the Rasisi government Iran's positions have hardened.

Moreover, at this time, other parties to the JCPOA are engaged in a blame game and are trying to portray the other side as responsible for the talks' failure. In general, after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and Iran's retaliatory measures, mistrust between Iran and the US has increased thus making agreement more difficult.

Iran insists that all sanctions and not just nuclear related sanctions should be lifted. However, the US has said that it will only remove sanctions related specifically to nuclear issues. This disagreement is a basic barrier to a successful end to the talks.

Iran has repeatedly stressed that the cornerstone of this round of negotiation is to lift sanctions against Iran and normalize Iran's economic and trade activities. I think Iran's demands are justified. However, the mere removal of sanctions may not be enough to guarantee Iran's return to normal economic relations with the outside world. Moreover, I believe without a significant improvement in US-Iran relations, many international companies will continue to shun Iran, even if some sanctions are removed. This became clear after the signing of the JCPOA in 2015. Despite the suspension of some sanctions, banks and companies did not rush to deal with Iran.

Iran argues that Biden administration is not going to guarantee that the US will not withdraw from the possible future agreement like what Trump did. Indeed, President Biden cannot commit fu-

ture US administrations to remain in the JCPOA. The only way Iran can be sure that future US administrations would not leave the JCPOA would be to resolve its difference with Washington. Iran's concerns are justified, but I think demanding a promise from Biden which would be applicable to future administrations is unachievable.

For many years now, I have been saying that Iran's expectations that Europe might adopt a position different from the US on Iran, including the nuclear issue, are unrealistic. Europe shares US views on Iran, and even if it differed from Washington, it will not risk its relations with the US for Iran's sake. The fact is that Iran cannot circumvent the US through Europe.



May the Vienna Talks Push Iran to Seek Completely Independent Directions?

Professor William Orman Beeman

William Orman Beeman is an American scholar whose specialty is the Middle East. He is a professor of anthropology at the University of Minnesota, where he is Chair of the Department of Anthropology. Beeman was a visiting scholar, at Stanford University (2017-2019) and has authored many articles and fourteen books on Iranian politics, theatre, language, and culture.

I am pessimistic about the outcome of new round of Vienna talks. Both sides are completely intransigent, and have been for a long time. Both sides want the other party to back down and make concessions before they will move. Iran insists on all sanctions being lifted. The United States insists on Iran returning to the status before Trump withdrew from the JCPOA--both reduced enrichment of uranium, and return to full IAEA inspections. With neither side giving an inch, there can be no progress. The key to success is to agree to have action simultaneously. This will require a brokered solution with a third party operating in good faith with both Iran and the United States.

I do not believe all parties are serious about returning to the JCPOA. President Biden is suffering from a drop in popularity. He cannot make concessions to Iran without suffering politically. The slightest concession will result in vicious attacks from Republicans, led by former President Trump. The Republicans are just waiting for this, waiting to pounce on President Biden. Iran's new government does not want to appear weak vis-a-vis the United States, and so they are also not making any concessions. They also fear, quite correctly, that they will make concessions, and then the United States will not respond. This is what happened many times in the past. The United States always wants to blame Iran, but it is a simple fact that President Trump withdrew the United States from the JCPOA. It is not Iran's fault. So, I think Iran is rightful when it comes to guarantees.

According to some reports, the current impasse is not because of an Iranian sense of immunity to pressure; rather it is largely because President Biden is refusing to commit his administration to lift sanctions on Iran during the remaining years of his presidency, even if Iran fully complies with the nuclear deal. If President Biden's popularity recovers and the Democratic Party shows strength in the next year, he will be in a stronger position to negotiate with Iran. For now being "tough" on Iran is a much better political position for him domestically.

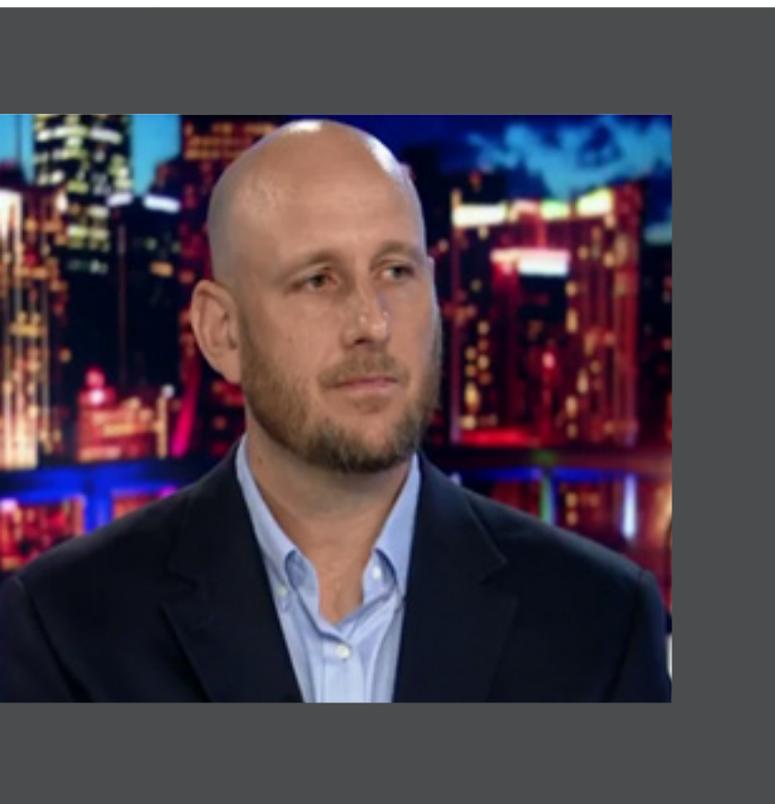
The United States has been demonizing Iran since the time of the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79. There is absolutely no political value for either Democrats or Republicans in making concessions to Iran. No American politician ever lost a

vote by attacking Iran. American politicians of either party who seem to be “soft” on Iran are attacked immediately. It is political suicide to agree to Iran’s terms without obtaining something substantial in return.

Some critics say the nuclear dispute is not resolvable through technical discussions. This is a political issue that is rooted in distrust between the U.S. and Iran. So, they need mutual trust. The JCPOA took nearly two years to negotiate with a great deal of yelling and shouting. The United States is not a trustworthy treaty or agreement partner. Iran has also used the lever of uranium enrichment to increase or decrease pressure on the United States and its European partners in the JCPOA. So both sides can be accused of acting in bad faith. Trust can only be built when people actually adhere to their promises.

Europe could be a much stronger, much more effective mediator in these talks. Thus far the European partners in the JCPOA have been very weak--almost non-existent in these talks. I would love to see France, the UK, or Germany step up and become a forceful mediator in these talks. Thus far they have been completely cowardly--mostly because they fear that they will suffer sanctions from the United States if they show the slightest favoritism to Iran.

Iran is already moving toward leaving the economic sphere of the United States and Europe. The move toward China, India, and Russia is a very clear direction for Iran’s future now. Without any cooperation from the United States in negotiations, and without any positive action toward mediation from Europe, we may see Iran seeking completely independent directions to solve its economic difficulties. The United States will regret this if it happens.



Fragile Circumstances of Vienna Talks, Roles and Players

Eric Lob

Dr. Lob is an assistant professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations. His research focuses on the intersection of development and politics in the Middle East. It specifically explores how state and non-state actors in the region instrumentalize development as a soft power mechanism to further their political interests both domestically and internationally. Lob currently teaches courses on comparative politics and international relations of the Middle East and on political violence and revolution.

Based on media reports in the United States and other Western countries, there does not seem to be a lot of optimism surrounding the talks and many questions remain. Which side would initiate the implementation of the agreement? Since the United States withdrew from the agreement and reimposed sanctions, Iranian logic dictated that it would first rejoin the agreement and lift sanctions through an executive order. However, the Biden administration has insisted that Iran scale back its nuclear activities before sanctions are lifted.

In previous rounds, some parties and observers suggested simultaneous and verifiable compliance on both sides. How could the Biden administration guarantee the United States would remain in a deal beyond three or seven years, assuming a Republican administration opposed to the deal came into office and without receiving Congressional approval? The latter seems unlikely given the narrow majority of the Democrats and the persistent infighting and gridlock that has plagued them.

US domestic competition partially, if not largely, explains the Biden administration's decision not to sign an executive order to rejoin the JCPOA, lift sanctions, and offer substantial concessions to Iran during the previous rounds of negotiation. With low approval ratings and before upcoming congressional and presidential elections, the administration lacks the political capital to adopt these measures due to foreign and domestic issues, including the Afghanistan withdrawal, pandemic persistence, economic adversity, legislative gridlock, and political polarization.

Apart from the economic difficulties the sanctions have created for Iran, what value does it see in a potential deal if the United States ostensibly cannot offer a long-term guarantee and if Iran continues to rely more on Russia and China for military and economic support? Even if Iran were to scale back its nuclear activities, how would the parties address the knowledge it has acquired during the past several years? Could the negotiations make meaningful progress if the talks between the United States and Iran have remained indirect? If an agreement were to be reached, would it represent the first step toward a regional security framework that reduces tensions between Iran and other states and addresses their

military activities, capabilities, and concerns?

Some scholars and analysts have pointed out the merits of a “less for less” initiative as an incremental step toward buying time for a more comprehensive and sustainable agreement. Such an initiative could be based on the sanctions exemptions for humanitarian goods that already exist and on the provisional version of the JCPOA that offered limited sanctions relief in exchange for measured nuclear rollbacks. In the process, largely unimplemented mechanisms like SHTA and INSTEX could be leveraged. However, concerns have existed among the parties and others that an interim agreement would become permanent and leave substantial economic sanctions and nuclear capabilities in place in the long run.

Under such fragile circumstances threatening any possible agreement, how constructive role can Europe play? Basically, Europe can institute mechanisms to help bypass sanctions, issue statements supporting the JCPOA, and serve as a constructive intermediary between the United States and Iran, especially if talks remain indirect. However, European governments, companies, and banks will not significantly invest in Iran so long as sanctions remain in place.

If the JCPOA remains on life support or is officially dead, the best scenario one could perhaps hope for is a continuation of low-intensity conflict between the United States, Iran, and their allies and partners without a major escalation or conflagration, as well as a resumption of bilateral talks between Iran and other states, particularly those in the Persian Gulf, with support from the United States and others, to manage and mitigate regional tensions. Some scholars and analysts are skeptical that a comprehensive and meaningful security framework in the region could be established without the JCPOA.

Israel opposes any agreement with Iran in order to contain it militarily and economically, and prevent it from pursuing détente and rapprochement with the United States. With limited political capital and influential domestic interests, the Biden administration has taken Israel’s message seriously and attempted to assuage its concerns about a potential agreement. At the same time, leading up to the most recent round of negotia-

tions, disagreements between the United States and Israel over such an agreement boiled over and spilled out into the public.



Iran and Strong Interest in Promoting Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone

Professor Richard Anderson Falk

Richard Anderson Falk is an American professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University. In 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) appointed Falk to a six-year term as a United Nations Special Rapporteur on "the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967".

I believe Europe in the Vienna talks is not likely to exert much influence on US diplomacy with Iran unless it fears the effects of a slide into war or aggravated instability in the Middle East. Europe seems currently more concerned about relations with Russia and China at this point, feeling a renewed dependence on the NATO alliance for its own security.

In an atmosphere of a second Cold War, Europe seems as though it will continue to follow Washington's leadership. As well, European governments, above all Germany, but also France and the UK, remain subject to considerable pressure from Israel, and are not likely to take a strong independent position that is opposed by either Washington or the Israeli government.

I think Iran's main source of leverage is to explore the benefits of geopolitical realignment, especially in relation to China and Russia, but also seeking greater support from the Islamic world and by way of regional accommodations.

Further in the background of the Vienna talks but in some respects Iran's strongest diplomatic tool would be to support and advocate long languishing proposals for a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (MENWFZ). Iran has somewhat surprisingly not yet voiced public vigorous objections to Israel's acquisition of nuclear weaponry and their subsequent development. By making the MENWFZ an active peace proposal, perhaps enlarged to encompass categories of Weapons of Mass Destruction (that is, chemical and biological weapons), Iran would be taking a constructive stand consistent with its commitment to its reliance on non-nuclear defense capabilities and security posture based on mutual principles of non-aggression.

Iran has a strong interest in promoting denuclearization for the region. Doing so would have additional benefits. It would expose Israel's nuclearism, and accompanying hypocrisy. It might even exert pressure on Israel to change course and itself become receptive to the virtues of MENWFZ. To make such an approach politically struggle and morally feasible for Tehran, it would be important to reaffirm Iranian solidarity with the Palestinian for basic rights. This factor would undoubtedly complicate the diplomacy surround-

ing the nuclear issue as Tehran.

By raising these issues I am suggesting the need for fresh thinking on all sides if the present signs of an impasse relating to the future of JCPOA are to be overcome, or if the Vienna process proves to be a failure with both sides shifting blame away from itself. This impasse would not exist, in my judgment, if Israel was not part of the diplomatic equation.

This dysfunctional obstacle should be overcome, and JCPOA restored in a form acceptable to both sides. Even should a favorable result be reached, it will not remove Israel from relevance, but would likely find Washington scrambling to provide Israel with tangible reassurances that its 'special relationship' with the US remains operative. Quite possibly, and most unfortunately, this could result in one more Palestinian setback in their struggle for basic rights.



Biden Administration Clearly Wants Almost any Kind of Deal

Professor Donald Lee Losman

Donald Lee Losman is a professor of Economics and Middle Eastern Studies at National Defense University and a lecturer in International Affairs at the Elliott School of International Affairs. His expertise includes Middle East Political economy and Security, economic sanction, international trade and public finance. Donald has worked as a business consultant, consultant to World Bank and Small Business Administration, and a professor. His teaching experience dates from the 1960s.

I am not optimistic about useful results deriving from the Vienna talks. From a Western perspective, Iran has put forth many unacceptable demands, although this is always the way in bargaining. If a new deal allows Iran to continue ballistic missile development and/or enrichment levels to where they are, it is likely that the Israelis will attempt to take any possible action. Importantly, there is some pressure on the Biden administration, which clearly wants almost any kind of deal, to back off on its demands.

Iran's request for removal of sanctions and access to the full benefits of trade is quite logical, but the U.S. presently believes that denial of these benefits is the best effort it can do to demonstrate to both its domestic audience and the world audience that it is opposed to Iran's nuclear and regional activities.

Europe will have some influence to bring American concessions as it has no fears of an Iranian nuclear program and it does not seem to be concerned about Middle East activities related to Iranian arms and financial support to its regional allies. European influence, however, will be marginal at best.

Presently there is little common ground, but the Biden administration gives every appearance of wanting to achieve some kind of agreement since one of its campaign promises was to restore the JCPOA. This inclination to get a deal makes the attainment of some deal easier, but Biden will face a great deal of domestic pressure to demand actions which Iran does not appear willing to accept. Nonetheless, a "less-for-less" deal that offers Tehran partial sanctions relief in exchange for a freeze or winding back of its nuclear work remains a good possibility. Each party could then leave Vienna with the claim that they got the best possible deal.

The Israelis are obviously opposed to any kind of economic relief to Iran, particularly since Iranian officials have made it clear that Israel should be eliminated; for instance, statements by Iranian Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi that "We will not back off from the annihilation of Israel, even one millimeter. We want to destroy Zionism in the world". However, the Israeli PM's recent public statement requesting no sanctions relief will

have no impact on the negotiations because Israeli influence, like that of the Europeans, is rather marginal. It is the domestic American audience/media that Biden must successfully address.

Biden cannot make an 'unbreakable' deal. That would require a Senate vote, where it is unlikely to pass. And even if it did, it could be broken if the Senate were to change its mind, but that too would be a very difficult effort.



Prospect of the Vienna Talks

Prof. James D. Savage

James D. Savage is a political science professor at the University of Virginia and teaches public policy in the Department of Politics and at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy. He is the recipient of the American Political Science Association's Harold D. Lasswell dissertation prize, an Olin-Bradley post-doctoral fellowship at Harvard University, a Council on Foreign Relations-Hitachi International Affairs fellowship, a Fulbright-European Union Affairs fellowship, a Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, a Fulbright Visiting Professor at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, Austria.

All parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agree that negotiations need to be reconvened. Discussions about resuming the treaty began in April between Iranian, EU officials, and other treaty country participants—China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom, but came to a halt in June. Iran's new President Ebrahim Raisi then approved resuming the current talks in Vienna.

I think the U.S. is serious about resuming the talks. The U.S. State Department declared on 3 November, "We believe it remains possible to quickly reach and implement an understanding on a mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA by closing the relatively small number of issues that remained outstanding."

The Biden administration is different than the Trump administration. Joe Biden was the vice president under President Barak Obama who championed the JCPOA. On 22 May 2015, Obama signed the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 into law. Both the US Senate and the House of Representatives supported the treaty. Trump rejected Obama's treaty and called for provisions that could only make it unacceptable for Iran. Iran's chief negotiator, Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri, will act to ensure that Iran's interests are advanced.

Some critics say the nuclear dispute is not resolvable through technical discussions, and indeed this is a political issue that is rooted in distrust between the U.S. and Iran. In my view and as a famous Russian proverb proclaims that one should "trust, but verify." Treaties traditionally provide for monitoring and surveillance to ensure compliance. This should be expected of any final version of the treaty. In 2016, the Obama White House stated, "The International Atomic Energy Agency verified that Iran has completed the necessary steps under the Iran deal that will ensure Iran's nuclear program is and remains exclusively peaceful."

The EU's role in the JCPOA through its envoy, Enrique Mora, negotiations is to serve a meeting chair for the meetings that begin in November. In this role, Mora can serve as an "honest broker" between parties. The EU is not realistically expected to or responsible for ensuring the treaty's

successful signing and enforcement. More important, in opposition to the Trump administration, in 2018 the European Commission declared US sanctions against Iran illegal in Europe. The Commission also instructed the European Investment Bank to assist European companies in investing in Iran.

One great challenge facing the JCPOA is the political divisions in the U.S. between Democratic President Biden and a deeply divided US Senate, which must approve any treaty. Senate Republicans and some Democrats are highly skeptical about renewing the treaty. Biden would have to end many of Trump's sanctions against Iran to gain Iranian support for the treaty, but doing so will likely alienate much of the Senate. Another great challenge facing the JCPOA is Iran's distrust of the U.S. after the Trump presidency. How President Raisi evaluates what Biden is willing to offer in a new treaty will also determine JCPOA's fate.



Vienna Talks and the US Deep State: Competition between the Anti-Chinese Faction and the Israeli Lobby

Andrew Korybko

Andrew Korybko is a political analyst, journalist and a regular contributor to several online journals, as well as a member of the expert council for the Institute of Strategic Studies and Predictions at the People's Friendship University of Russia. He specializes in Russian affairs and geopolitics, specifically the US strategy in Eurasia. He has published various works in the field of Hybrid Wars, including "Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change" and "The Law of Hybrid War: Eastern Hemisphere"

It's a positive sign that the talks have resumed. This shows that all parties are serious about exploring the potential for a solution to this issue. Nevertheless, the two most relevant parties – the US and Iran – must show maximum flexibility in working towards a compromise according to Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov in his latest interview with Newsweek magazine. There's cautious optimism that both of them have such intentions, but like always, it'll remain challenging to actually reach such a deal.

Iran's stance has been sincere and consistent: the Islamic Republic demands the lifting of all sanctions without preconditions. The Biden Administration regrettably inherited the problem that its predecessor created due to the influence of the "Israeli" lobby over the formulation of its West Asian policies. The incumbent's team is struggling to counteract the influence of these forces, which is why it sometimes sends mixed signals about its intent to compromise while simultaneously blaming Iran without basis for why no such compromise has yet to be agreed to.

The US' permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies ("deep state") are divided into two primary factions: the anti-Russian and anti-Chinese ones. There's also the pro-"Israeli" lobby that influences the formulation of the country's West Asian policies. Trump's greatest legacy was that his anti-Chinese faction became predominant over the anti-Russian one that he inherited from Obama. Biden in turn inherited this anti-Chinese one and has struggled to control the anti-Russian faction's efforts to sabotage his team's willingness to reach a "non-aggression pact" with Moscow in Europe.

This crucial context must first be explained in order to subsequently better understand the variables influencing the present government's will to reach an agreement with Iran. Biden, just like Trump before him, considers China to be the US' grand strategic threat. He wants to redeploy some of the US' forces in Europe to the Asia-Pacific in order to more aggressively "contain" China, hence why he's talked with Russian President Putin twice in less than half a year's time and plans to hold another round of discussions sometime in the coming future according to the latest reports.

Just like the anti-Russian “deep state” faction is trying to sabotage a US-Russian agreement in Europe, so too is the “Israeli” lobby trying to do the same in sabotaging a US-Iranian agreement in West Asia. This second-mentioned force is also driven by ideological considerations and hopes to keep the US’ military presence in the region for as long as possible. Biden, meanwhile, hopes to also redeploy some of his country’s forces from there to the Asia-Pacific for the earlier mentioned ends related to “containing” China. Nevertheless, he’s also struggling to control this lobby’s subversive efforts to scuttle a deal.

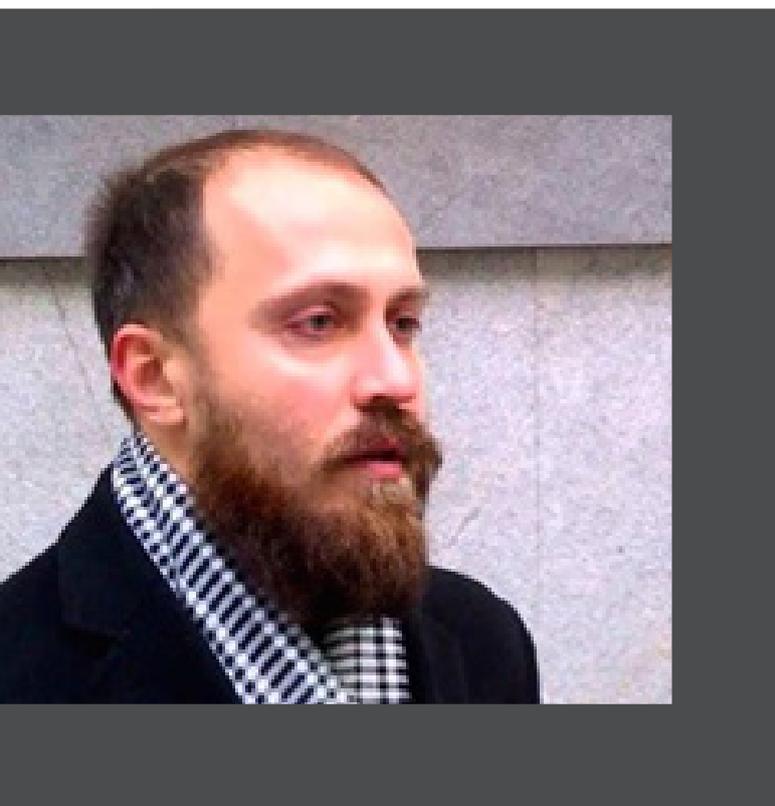
Having explained this “deep state” context, it can therefore be said that a real political will does indeed exist for the US to reach an agreement with Iran, but this is influenced by grand strategic anti-Chinese motivations than anything having to do all that much with Iran itself or even West Asia more broadly. It remains unclear whether the incumbent government can successfully control its anti-Russian and “Israeli” lobby forces in order to reach the deals with Russia and Iran respectfully that it in turn hopes will enable it to more aggressively “contain” China in the Asia-Pacific.

Iran has repeatedly stressed that the cornerstone of this round of negotiation is to lift sanctions against Iran and normalize Iran’s economic and trade activities. Indeed, this is a pragmatic demand that’s meant to revert everything back to how it was before Trump pulled out of the nuclear deal in 2018. The problem, however, is that the US’ “Israeli” lobby and that country’s traditional “Israeli” and Saudi regional allies will see this as “defeat” if that happens. These optics put pressure on the US to demand some sort of compromise from Iran in exchange, even if it doesn’t have anything to directly do with the nuclear deal.

For example, the two sides might explore the possibility of responsibly regulating their regional rivalry in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen as a quid pro quo for the US’ return to the pre-2018 status quo even if such an agreement isn’t publicized and its outcome is only evident some time afterwards. That could send reassuring signals to the US’ traditional allies that it hasn’t “abandoned” them like the “Israeli” lobby is fearmongering will happen in order to pressure Biden into not returning to the deal.

However, the most relevant domestic factor affecting this deal’s success is the “deep state” competition between the US’ predominant anti-Chinese faction and the “Israeli” lobby. The first wants to reach an agreement of some kind in order to redeploy some of the US’ regional forces to the Asia-Pacific to more aggressively “contain” China while the second wants to scuttle this deal in order to ensure “Israel’s” security interests. The outcome of this struggle will determine whether or not the US ultimately reaches an agreement with Iran.

Europe isn’t independent enough to play any serious role in shaping the outcome of this issue. It’s already proven itself subservient to its American patron’s demands after complying with its secondary sanctions threats to distance themselves from Iran following Trump’s withdrawal from the deal in 2018. It doesn’t matter what rhetoric their representatives espouse since their actions are all that matter. They’ll follow the US’ lead in this respect and thus shouldn’t be relied upon as an alternative force for influencing the course of these negotiations.



Vienna Talks: Global Chessboard behind Negotiations and Juridical Battles

Leonid Savi

Leonid Savi is the director of the Foundation for monitoring and forecasting of development of the cultural territorial spaces; Editor-in-Chief of the Geopolitica.ru think tank and member of military-scientific society of the Russian Ministry of Defense. He is the author of numerous books on geopolitics, international relations, conflicts and political philosophy issued in Russian, English, Spanish, Farsi, Serbian and Italian languages.

Actually, there are no clear results from Vienna because the US still looking to continue pushing on Iran. In fact, we have three camps there: Iran supported by Russia and China; European countries with neutral position but following American agenda in general and one antagonist that is the US. But the position of Iran in rejecting any claims of Washington is reasonable. It is a good step to stop any actions of the “preventive diplomacy” from Washington.

Both Russia and China are interested in the building of the multipolar world order, where Iran is part of this system. The US seems like rivalry interesting to keep own influence that before was framed like unipolar world order. Therefore, behind the negotiation process and juridical battles, there is a serious basement for supporting Iran. Moscow and Beijing understand it very well.

The EU now seems like an impotent block without a sovereign position. They have the doctrine of European autonomy, but it is on paper only. Brussels is under deep multilevel dependence of Washington.

Apparently, Iran has taken a serious stance on the Vienna talks and the West did not expect such an approach. For instance, it has sent a 40-member delegation to Vienna to take part in the new round of negotiation, submitted two draft proposals and reached a new agreement with the IAEA (in which Iran allows IAEA to reinstall cameras at Karaj nuclear facility). However, the US and Western countries did not have any constructive ideas the only reaction was talks that “Iran is not serious”! Iran needs to share detailed information about its own efforts globally.

During the administration of Obama, they were not so effective, but they tried to reach a deal. Under Trump and Mike Pompeo team responsible for foreign policy was openly anti-Iranian. They did not care about international order and JCPOA deal within it, but mostly promoted aggressive agenda. Now we have a mixed team but they are not skilled, not experienced and not looking forward. There is intellectual stagnation and a serious crisis in foreign policy planning. Anyway, the US must do something. Cause there is internal pressure too.

Iran has repeatedly stressed that the cornerstone

of this round of negotiation is to lift sanctions against Iran and normalize Iran's economic and trade activities. Indeed, this position is normal and in accordance with international law. No one can't impose such sanctions on Iran under the umbrella of own fears and incompetence.

The polarization process is also used by enemies of Iran - mostly Zionist lobby groups in Washington and Congress. They exploit any window of opportunity to strengthen their own influence. Under the umbrella of democracy promotion and such empty words like that they impose anti-Iranian agenda step by step. The same is about the anti-Russian, anti-Chinese, and anti-DPRK lobbies. Not to forget that in the strategy of national security of the US Iran, Russia, North Korea and China has been labeled as a threat to the US.



Constructive Paths Forward amid Challenges

Charles Ortel

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Absent the long and painful history of U.S. government relations with Iran, one might view resumption of negotiations in Vienna as constructive. However, one cannot fairly ignore history or the thorny issues that make dealmaking difficult. Even President Trump had trouble nudging Israel to make concessions required to forge peace agreements that were negotiated during his presidency with certain nations previously hostile to Israel. In contrast to will that Trump enjoyed, the Biden Administration includes a number of anti-Israel persons so any agreement reached will likely be tougher to sell to Israeli politicians who themselves are hardly unified in their own thinking.

Furthermore, the JCPOA failed chiefly because it was never structured to be a Senate-ratified treaty. To stand up over time, any deal in its entirety must be ratified in the U.S. Senate. The U.S. Constitution requires a two-thirds vote which is a heavy lift now and likely will become more difficult in 2023. Opinion polls suggest that internal support for the Biden Administration is eroding faster than in previous “honeymoon” periods of past American presidents. Simply put, a team that tried to sell a botched withdrawal from Afghanistan as “success” will not be able to convince key players that JCPOA is worth supporting.

Perhaps Iran sees the ongoing process as constructive. That said, there is rising and profound sentiment building inside America against the Biden Administration. If these trends continue through November 2022, the current leadership in America will find itself with greatly reduced flexibility and authority, particularly to forge bold moves anywhere.

Like American states under our Articles of Confederation before we adopted our Constitution, attempts by the European Union to derive benefits of scale economically and politically have been overwhelmed by bureaucrats, deep-seated historical differences, deficits, debts and gimmicks such as negative interest rates. Before we consider vexing structural differences including aged populations and reliance upon imported energy, Europe faces daunting internal challenges and does not currently have meaningful independent abilities to project political and military power.

There certainly are constructive paths forward but confidence in the Biden Administration and globalist bureaucracies is already dangerously low.



Vienna Talks: Internal and External Pressures

Professor Wyn Rees

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It is encouraging that talks in Vienna continue. Both sides want a resumption of the JCPOA but there are clearly internal and external pressures. On the US side, there are Republicans and even some Democrats that are skeptical of resuming the deal. They argue that the constraints it imposes on Iran are insufficient and that some of the sunset clauses will be expiring within the next few years. Many of these critics were opposed to the deal in the first place and it is unsurprising that they remain opposed. Their particular concerns relate not just to the nuclear deal but to Iran's involvement in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. Such US critics are fuelled by Israeli, Saudi and UAE opposition to the JCPOA.

A less hawkish group of critics point to the problem that Iran has been enriching uranium since the suspension of the deal. Such critics argue that releasing Iran from all of the sanctions imposed under Trump will end US leverage over Iran. Biden's administration has to navigate these groups and deliver a deal that they can sell domestically. In addition, Iran is a proud nation and does not want to appear to lose face in resuming an agreement with a US government that left the original JCPOA agreement.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the Iranian Council for Defending the Truth.