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Udi Evental and Raz Zimmt

Forget a comprehensive Iran deal

Two major events have recently put the Iranian nuclear project back into international focus. First is the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, who was considered the dominant figure in the Iranian nuclear program. Second is the interview given by U.S. President-elect Joe Biden to The New York Times, in which he reiterated his intent to re-join the nuclear agreement with Iran and remove the sanctions imposed on it by President Donald Trump.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hastened to warn that returning to a flawed agreement, as he put it, would be a mistake. Netanyahu reiterated that not only does the agreement not block Iran's path to a bomb, but it enables Tehran to finance a campaign of terror, occupation and destruction throughout the Middle East.

Various experts in Israel and the U.S. say that any agreement with Iran that focuses solely on nukes but doesn't also deal with the other threats Iran posed would be unstable and doomed to failure.

Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi said Israel must persuade the Biden administration to create a link between the nuclear issue and Iran's missile program and support of terror. Trump's special envoy Elliot Abrams also said that including more components of the threat

during negotiations with Tehran would result in "a better deal."

Despite these assessments, it's highly doubtful that seeking a "comprehensive deal" with Iran that would address all the components of the multidimensional threat it poses actually serves Israel's deeper interests. The demand to link together all the issues strengthens the notion that Israel has in recent years diverted its emphasis on the nuclear issue to halting

wars. In contrast to Israel's success in slowing, at least temporarily, Iran's military entrenchment in the region and its efforts to arm Hezbollah with advanced weaponry, Israel's ability to deal with Iran's continuing nuclearization effectively and at lower cost has significantly lessened over time.

Iran is expected to categorically refuse what it perceives not just as giving up on vital national interests, like its continued support of regional allies, first

given its traditional preference for using proxies and low-signature activity over direct and overt actions. More importantly, even in the event that Iranian violations in the realm of terror could be proven, it's doubtful whether the international arena, and even Israel, would see them as sufficient grounds to torpedo a future agreement if that agreement provided a reasonable solution to the nuclear challenge.

Understanding this reality, and wishing to avoid a situation where Iran demands of the West concessions to its nuclear program in exchange for compromises on its regional policies, both Israel and the United States have for years objected to Tehran's demand to include regional issues in the negotiations, viewing that demand as "foot-dragging."

The bottom line is that decision makers in Israel will have to sober up from the illusion that a "comprehensive deal" can be imposed on Iran. Such an agreement isn't realistic, and a policy of sticking to these maximalist demands will only push Israel further away from its primary goal: stopping the Iranian nuclear program and fixing the serious deficiencies in the nuclear agreement.

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Iran's moves in the region, with a stress on Hezbollah's precision missile project. This is a mistaken order of priorities.

There's no doubt that the arming of Israel's enemies with missiles, and certainly with precision missiles, poses a strategic threat. Nevertheless, Iran's push for nuclear weapons is far more dangerous and it must continue to be at the top of Israel's national priorities.

The nuclearization of Iran is liable to lead to a fundamental change in the regional rules of the game and invalidate the achievements of the campaign between the

and foremost Hezbollah, but also as backing down from the principles of the Islamic revolution. Even if Iran were prepared to discuss regional issues, it is expected to raise its own demands during negotiations. For example, restricting Israeli activity in Syria and Lebanon and the U.S. presence in Iraq and the Gulf. This is expected to allow Iran to advance its nuclear program in a manner that will provide it extra leverage in the talks.

Moreover, even if Iran would officially agree to restrain its regional policy, it will be extremely difficult to enforce that, particularly

Col. (res.) Udi Evental is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Policy and Strategy at the IDC Herzliya. Dr. Raz Zimmt is an expert on Iran at the Institute for National Security Studies.