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Introduction

The Framework Agreement announced by the P5+1+EU and Iran on April 2nd in Lausanne sets out, in relatively great detail, the building blocks for reaching a full comprehensive agreement to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis by the specified deadline of June 30th. Moreover, U.S. President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry made it clear over the past few weeks that the conclusion of a Framework Agreement was a necessary condition for the continuation of negotiations, and that the deadlines would not be extended without it. The US administration pointedly stated that the June 30th deadline could not be extended without a framework agreement, implying that, if such a framework agreement were reached, an extension of the final deadline may be possible.

Thus, if it leads to the successful signing of a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which is then adopted, implemented and complied with by Iran for its full duration, the Lausanne Framework Agreement will remove the threat of Iranian breakout to nuclear weapons for a good many years, at least ten to fifteen. However, the “ifs” are critical: IF Iran fully complies with the agreement for its entire duration.

The following is based on the U.S. State Department Fact Sheet, and the explanations given on April 2nd by President Obama, Secretary of State Kerry, Foreign Minister Zarif, and EU High Representative Mogherini.¹

¹ This framework agreement and all of these statements are conditional, of course, on the parties reaching a final Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which will now be negotiated and coordinated for implementation, with the intention of completing it before June 30th, or by June 30th, or thereafter by mutual consent if

Number of centrifuges: Iran will be allowed to operate for enrichment 5,060 IR-1 type centrifuges for the first phase of the agreement, which is to last for ten years. An additional 1,044 centrifuges, also IR-1 type, will be allowed to remain installed, but will not be used to enrich uranium. Thus, in total, 6,104 centrifuges will remain installed, all of the IR-1 type. The remaining approximately 13,000 centrifuges already installed will be "removed", and stored under IAEA safeguards. The use of the term "removed" has yet to be clarified, in terms of the degree to which they will be dismantled; but regardless of this necessary clarification, this is a dramatic rollback, and precludes the installation of additional centrifuges, including more advanced types. In addition to the 19,884 centrifuges already installed, Iran had already completed preparations for the installation of about 9,000 more, so, without the agreement, Iran would shortly (within months from the expiration of the Interim Agreement JPA) have had almost 30,000 centrifuges enriching uranium, including several thousand IR-2m type capable of enrichment at twice the rate of the IR-1. The current framework agreement limits Iran to only one sixth of that capability (or less) for a period of ten years. On the other hand, it does leave Iran with the essential infrastructure to execute breakout at a time of its choosing, if it decides to abrogate or violate the agreement.

Duration of the agreement: the first phase of the agreement strictly limiting Iran's nuclear activities will be in force for ten years, as the U.S. had insisted, a compromise from Iran, which had initially insisted on a deal of five years and no more. The second phase, under which some of the restrictions on the Iran nuclear program will be eased, will last for an additional five years, for an overall of fifteen years for the duration of the agreement. Some elements of the agreement, especially regarding verification, will extend beyond the fifteen years to twenty, twenty-five, or even indefinitely.

Iran's stock of LEU: in the November 2013 Interim Agreement and subsequent January 2014 JPA, Iran was permitted to retain 7,600 kg of LEU in UF6 form produced prior to the signing of those agreements. The 2 April 2015 State Department Fact Sheet states that Iran currently has 10,000 kg of enriched uranium stocks, possibly including LEU held in oxide forms and the oxide left over from the previous 20 percent enrichment effort. Of this existing stock, the Framework agreement stipulates that Iran will only be allowed to retain 300 kg of LEU for a period of fifteen years. The remainder will be "neutralized," as per the

necessary; it also assumes that the agreement will be adopted for implementation by the states and governments concerned.

term used by Kerry when he claimed that "98 percent of Iran's enriched uranium stock will be neutralized." The use of the term "neutralized" indicates that the method to do this has not yet been finalized, and that the options mentioned include export outside of Iran, or downblending to the natural uranium level, and/or processing into oxide powder. Zarif has spoken of exporting it for money – "Iran will become an exporter of enriched uranium on the world market for profit" – which may indicate that it will be shipped to Russia after all, or elsewhere, in exchange for payment of one kind or another, or "neutralized", in Kerry's terms, by some other method. If and when executed, this will again signify a significant rollback of Iran's nuclear capabilities, thereby stretching the "breakout warning time."

The Arak reactor: the Framework Agreement stipulates that the core of the IR-40 reactor will be redesigned and rebuilt so that it will not be able to produce weapons grade plutonium at all. The currently installed core will be removed, and destroyed or shipped out of Iran. Iran will not build any more heavy water reactors for the next fifteen years at least. There will be no reprocessing, no reprocessing facility, and the spent fuel of the reactor will be shipped out of Iran for its lifetime. All of the above will be implemented under strict safeguards, monitoring and verification.

Fordow: Fordow will stop being used to enrich uranium, and will be turned into a research facility. The language used in this regard indicates that there is still no final resolution concerning all aspects of Fordow, as all of the above mentioned have stated that "there will be no fissile material at Fordow". It is clear that some centrifuges will remain installed at Fordow, but not to enrich uranium – it is stipulated that "almost two-thirds of the centrifuges at Fordow will be removed." There are currently 2710 centrifuges installed at Fordow, so the arithmetic shows that the 1,044 centrifuges that would remain installed without enrichment would be at Fordow, but this has not been unequivocally stated. Neither is it entirely clear what "fissile material" means – does it mean enriched uranium (U235 - fissile material), or any type of uranium (U238 - fissionable material). Thus, it remains unclear what Fordow will be used for, especially if it has centrifuges that cannot be used to enrich uranium, which is what they are designed to do. There is mention of Fordow perhaps being used to produce medical isotopes, but it is not clear what connection there is between centrifuges and medical isotopes – centrifuges usually use UF6 gas, which is extremely toxic and corrosive, and must not come in direct contact with humans, or of inert gases, neither of which would seemingly be relevant to the production of medical isotopes.

Additional Protocol: Iran will re-implement the Additional Protocol indefinitely - there is no time-limit specified (early media reports mentioned that it would only be implemented for a year, but this was incorrect). Thus, IAEA inspectors will be granted access to any site that they wish to inspect or are concerned about. Iranian violation of this principle will inevitably lead to immediate IAEA notification of the problem, upon which the international community will, naturally, have the option to act or not to act.

Enrichment beyond LEU: Iran will not enrich uranium beyond LEU (3.67% is the figure stipulated in the agreement) for a period of at least fifteen years. In other words, Iran will not resume enrichment to the 20 percent level or higher as it had threatened to do prior to the November 2013 Interim agreement.

Natanz: FEP will be the only site at which uranium will be enriched, and it too will undergo modification.

PMD: Iran will comply with its agreements with the IAEA on "Clarification of Unresolved Issues" regarding "Possible Military Dimensions" of its nuclear program. The record on this front so far is dismal, and what this may mean for the future is circumspect: there are elements in Iran, such as the IRGC, and others, who absolutely refuse the IAEA access to "military" sites which Iran claims have no bearing on nuclear issues, such as SSM production, R&D or testing facilities, such as Parchin, as well as others.

Sanctions: Iran accepts that sanctions will be removed gradually as compliance with the provisions of the agreement is verified, and not all at once with the signing of the agreement, as was desired by the Iranian negotiating team. Obama asserted in his statement that sanctions applied in connection with Iran's activities in the sphere of terrorism, human rights abuses and ballistic missiles – will remain in place, and are not affected by this agreement.

Other verification issues: the IAEA will continue to conduct verification at centrifuge production sites for twenty years and at uranium mines for twenty-five years.

R&D on advanced type centrifuges: the Framework Agreement stipulates that "Iran will not use its IR-2, IR-4, IR-5, IR-6, or IR-8 models to produce enriched uranium for at least ten years. Iran will engage in limited research and development with its advanced centrifuges, according to a schedule and parameters which have been agreed to by the P5+1."

ASSESSMENT

The dispute between advocates of the agreement and its opponents remains unchanged. Advocates of the agreement assume that a comprehensive and detailed agreement will prevent Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons for at least the next fifteen years and possibly beyond that, while opponents emphasize that it leaves much of Iran's infrastructure intact, which will allow it to break out to producing nuclear weapons at a time of its choosing. The divide between advocates and opponents of the agreement is a natural division between holders of liberal and conservative views of how the world works and what should be done to address the challenges. Liberals believe that international crises like this one can and should be resolved without recourse to war, if possible, by the forging of common denominators of interest with the adversary – however dislikable – so long as the primary goals do not have to be abandoned to achieve that result. Conservatives believe that it is exceedingly naïve to believe that ideologically extremist regimes will honor the commitments they make on paper, and that they will manipulate gullible democratic governments; thus, in this view, the best way to achieve the desired goals is to be assertive, including demonstrating resolve by applying pressure, escalation, threats of military action, and, if necessary, military action against such implacable adversaries.

If strictly complied with, the provisions included in the Framework Agreement will extend the Iranian “breakout time” to nuclear weapons from the current two months, depicted by Kerry, to approximately a year, give or take a few months, believed to be sufficient for intelligence to discover the breakout or violation, and to take action to foil the attempted breakout.² The extension of this breakout timeline, however, *is entirely conditional* on Iran accepting the provisions, enacting them, acting upon them in good faith, establishing their compliance, and then maintaining full compliance for the duration of the agreement, fifteen years in the least. Any violation of this agreement could considerably shorten “breakout warning time.”

Liberals hope that a nuclear deal with Iran will accomplish the desired goal of cutting off any Iranian attempt, or even ambition, to break out to acquire nuclear weapons in an environment in which the attention of the world will be focused elsewhere. They do, however, want to leave open the door to apply coercive measures if, for some reason, Iran’s nuclear ambitions rear up again. Conservatives, in contrast, believe categorically that Iran

² The definition of “breakout” time is itself very ambiguous and unclear, largely dependent on scientific evaluations that are subject to the interpretation of whoever evaluates the data.

will never fully comply with such an agreement for its full duration and that this agreement will therefore only postpone – perhaps only for a short time frame – Iran’s inevitable breakout to nuclear weapons, and leave Iran with increased wherewithal to execute such a breakout. Opponents of the agreement are convinced that, as long as Iran is ruled by the current Islamic Revolutionary regime, and given the dynamics of that regime’s structure and ideology, it will never abandon its nuclear program (and its military dimensions). In this sense, Rouhani's grand achievement will be the rescinding of sanctions while retaining Iran's breakout capability essentially intact.

These in essence are the explanations for the divergent evaluations of the Framework Agreement by different international actors, and why uninvolved or uninformed observers may be bewildered by the polarized claims loudly made in this regard. Advocates of the agreement – including the President of the United States of America – talk assertively about a "good" deal; while critics of the agreement – including the Prime Minister of Israel and many politicians in the United States – claim that the deal is "Bad, very bad."

The bottom line is as follows: if the deal is honored by Iran, it is in fact “good,” at least when compared to the imminent renewal of Iran's previous relentless expansion of its breakout capabilities, frozen by the November 2013 Interim Agreement and January 2014 JPA. It is also “good,” in comparison to the options of war and the inevitable global and regional instability that would follow as a result of the uncontrolled escalation. On the other hand, the agreement is “bad,” if Iran fails to comply, instead using it as leverage to rescind the sanctions, and within a short number of years resumes expansion of breakout capabilities, or seeks breakout, because the agreement has failed to remove the essential infrastructure required for a breakout. It is *very bad* if it paves the way for Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapons arsenal, in an environment completely dissimilar from the Cold War assumptions and presumptions about nuclear weapons (i.e. that you can never use them), and the evolution of deterrence theory and deterrence stability.