



IRANIAN NUCLEAR “UNDERSTANDING”: KEY CONCERNS

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*Iran and the “P5+1” (the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, China and Russia) have been negotiating since late 2013 to reach a “long-term comprehensive solution that would ensure Iran’s nuclear programme will be exclusively peaceful.” On **April 2, 2015**, Iran and the P5+1 reached an “understanding” or “framework” of the “key parameters” of a deal with Iran. Negotiators now face a June 30 deadline to reach a final, written agreement.*

If a final agreement is reached, Iran will transform from a state sponsor of terrorism with an illicit nuclear program, to a state sponsor of terrorism awash with billions of dollars in sanctions relief and an internationally endorsed, industrial scale nuclear program. Such a scenario will absolutely propel Iran’s regional dominance.

The Committee has conducted extensive oversight of the negotiations, including holding [nearly 20](#) hearings this Congress and last, and has identified the following serious concerns with the current state of negotiations.

“One Problem Is That There Are Two Versions”

Iran and the P5+1 are already arguing over what was agreed to in the April 2 “understanding,” calling into question the viability of any real, long-term agreement.

- The only document bearing the April 2 understanding was a brief [Joint Statement](#) released by Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and European Union High Representative Federica Mogherini.
- The Obama Administration then released its own “[fact sheet](#)” outlining the “key parameters” of a final agreement. However, Iran’s Foreign Minister immediately dismissed the U.S. fact sheet, [tweeting](#): “*The solutions are good for all, as they stand. There is no need to spin using ‘fact sheets’ so early on.*”
- As the [New York Times](#) reported, these initial disputes “*have raised the question of whether the two sides are entirely on the same page.*” And as this [WSJ editorial](#) makes clear, many crucial details, including the scope of sanctions relief and verification of Iran’s compliance with a deal, remain to be negotiated.

Enrichment

In a letter to President Obama last month, [367 Members of Congress wrote](#) that “*verifiable constraints on Iran’s nuclear program must last for decades.*” **The April 2 “understanding” does not appear to meet this standard.**

- The ability to enrich uranium is a key bomb-making technology that is *not* needed for a civilian nuclear program (most countries fuel their nuclear power plants through the international market).
- Despite [President Obama's pledge in 2012](#) that “the deal we’ll accept” with Iran “is that they end their nuclear program,” the P5+1 negotiators quickly conceded that Iran would be allowed to maintain this bomb-making technology.
- In what looks to be an expansion of this already troubling concession on enrichment, the Administration’s fact sheet states that Iran will be allowed to operate *thousands* of centrifuges.
- The strictest restrictions on Iran’s enrichment capability will “sunset,” or expire, in only 10 years. After 15 years *all* restrictions on Iran’s enrichment capability will be removed, allowing Iran to operate hundreds of thousands of centrifuges to enrich on an industrial scale, leaving it perilously close to a nuclear weapon.
- Despite Administration claims of a long-lasting agreement, the 20 and 25 year numbers in its fact sheet merely refer to the time during which Iran may be subject to inspections.

Verification

In the same letter to President Obama, 367 Members also wrote that “*Given Iran’s decades of deception, negotiators must obtain maximum commitments to transparency by Iran. Any inspection and verification regime must allow for short notice access to suspect locations...*” **Unfortunately, Iran has not come clean on its past attempts at a nuclear weapon, and thus far has not guaranteed unfettered access to problematic sites going forward.**

- Despite the Administration’s claims that a final agreement will be based on “[unprecedented verification](#),” Iran has not demonstrated its commitment to complying with such transparency and verification measures.
- Iran’s compliance on this subject is important because, as a recent Defense Department study found, U.S. capabilities to locate undeclared nuclear facilities or covert nuclear programs are “either inadequate, or more often, do not exist.” As a result, experts stress that the U.S. will be fully dependent on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to detect Iranian violations of a final agreement.
- Experts [have also warned](#) that without “anytime, anywhere” inspections – including access to Iran’s military facilities – it will be impossible for the IAEA to verify Iran’s compliance with a final agreement. Unfortunately, history has shown that such intrusive inspections are [difficult to enforce](#), and [as one former inspector cautioned](#) “Iran has cheated and been more noncooperative with its nonproliferation obligations than I think any other country.”
- Moreover, Iran [continues to refuse](#) to comply with an [existing agreement](#) to provide the IAEA with access to suspected nuclear sites. If Iran does not comply with these transparency requirements, granting access to the people, equipment and documents involved in its prior nuclear-related activities, then the IAEA will not be able to establish an accurate baseline for assessing the agreement’s implementation.

Sanctions

The timing, pace, and scope of sanctions relief is being disputed by both sides. [As the Washington Post notes](#), “unless sanctions relief is conditioned on Iranian performance, the United States and its partners will lose their leverage.”

- The Administration's fact sheet states that Iran will receive U.S. and EU sanctions relief only after the IAEA has verified the fulfillment of its commitments.
- However, [Iran claims](#) that “at the same time as the start of Iran’s nuclear-related implementation work, all of the sanctions will be automatically annulled on a single specified day.”
- In addition, the Administration’s [rhetoric of “snap back” sanctions](#) does not appear to square with the international “[dispute resolution process](#)” described in its fact sheet; a dispute resolution process – which would likely require Russia’s cooperation on the UN Security Council – is at odds with the quick re-imposition of sanctions suggested by the term “snap back.”

Iran’s Destabilizing Role in the Region

Ultimately, a bad deal will only fuel Iran’s support for terrorism and its destabilizing activities in the region – increasing the likelihood of future clashes among Iran and its neighbors.

- From propping up Assad in Syria, to supporting the overthrow of a U.S. partner in Yemen, to supplying rockets to Hamas and Hezbollah, Iran is behind much of the turmoil we see in the Middle East.
- As recently as the end of last month, Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, [called for “death to America.”](#)
- Further, the April 2 framework makes no mention of future limits on Iran’s ballistic missile program. Such a program is of great concern because ballistic missiles allow for the quick, accurate delivery of nuclear weapons over long distances. Ayatollah Khamenei has [previously ridiculed](#) talk of limiting Iran’s ballistic missile program, saying Tehran should continue to “mass produce” such weapons.
- **A bad deal that leaves the regime on the brink of developing a nuclear weapon, with billions in sanctions relief, would only increase the Iranian threat.**



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