

## **New negotiations on nuclear deal with Iran: How stabilization can succeed without trust in Tehran**

*With the U.S. pulling out of the agreement, time is running out. Four principles the West must adhere to at all costs.*

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The deal was considered a milestone of Barack Obama's U.S. foreign policy and was also a major diplomatic success for European Union: the Iran nuclear deal, also known by its English acronym JCPOA. It was concluded in 2015.

Its principle: In return for the waiver of economic sanctions, Iran undertook to scale down its nuclear program and, above all, to no longer store or produce nuclear weapons-grade uranium in large quantities. It also pledged to allow International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors into the country on a regular basis to monitor compliance.

In 2018, Donald Trump pulled out of the nuclear agreement, and as a result, Iran also stopped complying with the deal.

### **EU must influence new nuclear deal**

Now that Joe Biden is president of the United States, diplomatic efforts to revive the Iran nuclear deal are picking up steam. This is a new opportunity for the European Union to play an important role in shaping it. It is in the EU's vital political and strategic interest not only to show diplomatic support, but also to influence the content of the renewed nuclear deal.

To make the return to this deal strategically durable as well as credible, some basic principles must be adhered to: First, the deal must respect all three pillars of the original JCPOA: These include the core provisions of the agreement itself. In 2015, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 2231 banning so-called dual-use weapons delivery systems, i.e., weapons systems that can be used both nuclear and conventional. Iran must abide by this.

It is also central that inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) be given unrestricted access to nuclear facilities in Iran. These inspectors must be provided with all the necessary powers to verify the obligations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Second, care must be taken to ensure that Iran reverses its provocative treaty violations—such as the ongoing increase in uranium enrichment. The country must also implement key provisions of the nuclear deal, including those that Iran had ignored even before the U.S. pulled out of the deal in 2018.

Most important are those provisions that were supposed to guarantee that Iran would not be on a path to rearmament. For example, two nuclear facilities in Iran have not been converted to exclusively civilian use as agreed. Compliance with these provisions, together with the comprehensive monitoring rights for the IAEA, are the prerequisite to confirm the peaceful intent of the use of nuclear technologies in Iran.

### **Stopping the lifting of sanctions at the slightest violation**

Third, the easing and possibly even the full lifting of sanctions imposed on Iran must be conditioned on unconditional compliance with all the basic provisions of the revived deal. The European Union should make it unmistakably clear that in case of deviation or even direct violation of these provisions, it will immediately advocate the so-called "snap-back mechanism," i.e., the reimposition of sanctions against Iran.

Fourth, shortly after the nuclear agreement re-enters into force, the EU should take the lead in negotiations to advance a "longer and stronger" agreement with Iran in a second phase, an agreement that goes beyond the nuclear deal in the longer term. These negotiations must address those critical issues not covered by the nuclear deal: Iran's ballistic missile program, destabilization of neighboring countries, and support for military units in Iran's Persian Gulf neighbors.

Time is pressing here, as the arms moratorium included in the nuclear agreement already expired in October. Other Iranian commitments will expire in the coming years. Iran's strategy is to deliberately slow down negotiations. This will make it more difficult to achieve a follow-up agreement.

### **Time is running out with the U.S. renegeing on the deal**

In conclusion, since the U.S. withdrew from the nuclear agreement, Iran has made progress in some nuclear technologies, such as the use of advanced centrifuges to enrich weapons-grade uranium, that cannot be reversed. These technologies shorten the so-called "breakout time," the period of time it takes for the country to produce fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. This has significantly shortened the time period envisioned by the original agreement that Iran would need to become a nuclear weapons state.

At the same time, Iran's policies threaten the stability of the entire region. Therefore, in parallel with diplomatic negotiations, the U.S. and EU must jointly make clear that they would respond decisively should the country decide to develop for nuclear weapons or equip its allied militias in neighboring Persian Gulf countries with precision missiles and other high-value weapons systems or deploy such weapons systems in neighboring countries.

We have no illusions about the nature of the current regime in Iran, its nuclear ambitions and regional interventions. We do not close our eyes to the Iranian ambition to destroy Israel. And yet we do not give up hope for a sober, illusion-free attempt at multilateral stabilization. For such an attempt to succeed, a credible European diplomatic contribution is essential. However, the use of force must remain a last resort.

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