

# The Iran Deal: Understanding the Ambiguities



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As the administration concludes negotiations with Iran to place limits on its nuclear program, policymakers evaluating the final deal must understand the key ambiguities that were left unresolved in the framework of the deal announced in April. In this document, we explain the gaps in the framework and why they matter.<sup>1</sup>

The deal, as currently described, would take off-line the majority of the infrastructure Iran would need to make a dash for the bomb by blocking Iran's four pathways to a nuclear weapon. Those include the plutonium pathway through the Arak heavy water reactor, the uranium pathway through the Natanz facility, the uranium pathway through the Fordow facility, and a covert pathway by which Iran might develop a nuclear weapon at a secret, undisclosed site. A deal based on the framework would lengthen the amount of time Iran would need to make that dash from 2-3 months to more than a year. Most importantly, the deal puts Iran under a tight set of inspections that would detect any attempts to break its commitments or rush toward a bomb covertly.

Though the framework serves as a substantive and credible basis for work to continue toward a final deal, troubling statements by Iran's Supreme Leader have suggested that some big issues remain unresolved.<sup>2</sup> Among them are differences on interpretation of inspections requirements, implementation details, and sanctions provisions.

## What's the inspection regime?

The Administration has announced that international inspectors will have regular access to all of Iran's nuclear facilities, including to its enrichment facility at Natanz, and its former enrichment facility at Fordow. This access will include "the most up-to-date, modern monitoring technologies."<sup>3</sup> Inspectors are expected to have access to

Iran's full fissile supply chain, nuclear fuel sources, centrifuge-related research and development, and procurement and fabrication channels.<sup>4</sup> Iran has also agreed to implement the additional inspection requirements set by the international community, which provides for greater inspector access to both declared and undeclared facilities.<sup>5</sup> However, Iran has stated that it will not allow inspection of suspected military sites. This is a serious issue: there is real concern that Iran might have been operating a previous covert nuclear weapons program at such facilities.<sup>6</sup> All P5+1 countries have agreed that they would like Iran to address concerns about the so-called "Possible Military Dimensions" of its program. Iran had allowed international inspectors into its suspected facility at Parchin in November 2005 but later refused them access.<sup>7</sup>

### **What will happen to the centrifuges that are taken off line?**

All centrifuges and enrichment infrastructure removed from Fordow and Natanz will be placed under continuous monitoring. Iran will not be permitted to reinstall or re-operationalize them. *There are remaining questions on where the dismantled infrastructure would be stored (onsite, in a central location inside Iran, or outside the country) and how quickly Iran could re-install the infrastructure if they were to kick the inspectors out.*

### **What about phasing of sanctions relief?**

US and EU sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program would be suspended only after the IAEA has verified that Iran has fulfilled its commitments in key nuclear-related areas (limits on uranium enrichment, Arak site, possible military dimensions and cooperation with access and inspections requirements). Past UN sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program will also be lifted at this time. *It is not clear how, after international inspectors verify key nuclear steps, suspension of U.S. and EU sanctions will occur.*<sup>8</sup> Iran has maintained that sanctions relief should be immediate;<sup>9</sup> the U.S. and EU

maintain that phased suspension is the best way to ensure compliance while still providing incentives to Iran.

### **What sanctions will remain in place after a final deal?**

The deal will cover only sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program, but Iran has been sanctioned for many other bad acts. Over a dozen U.S. sanctions measures alone related to Iran's support for terrorism and violations of human rights would remain in place after the conclusion of a deal and after the suspension any nuclear-related sanctions. Similar EU measures would also remain in place.<sup>10</sup>

### **Could sanctions be re-imposed if Iran violates the agreement, and if so, how quickly?**

The re-imposition of sanctions in the case of a violation of the agreement by Iran remains a valuable leverage tool to ensure Iranian compliance. The U.S. would like to ensure that the process is quick so that Iran could not drag out the process while it made a run for the bomb. For sanctions imposed by the U.S., if they are only suspended and not repealed, they could be re-imposed if Iran violates the agreement. But sanctions that were imposed by the international community are more complicated to re-impose if a violation occurs. Recently, the P5+1 reached an agreement for a process that would allow sanctions to "snap-back" into place. That agreement would reportedly mandate suspected breaches by Iran be taken up by a P5+1 dispute-resolution panel, which would review the allegations and come up with an assessment. If Iran were to be found in non-compliance with the terms of the deal, then U.N. sanctions would be restored without a normal UNSC vote process.<sup>11</sup> It is not clear if the Iranian negotiating team has agreed to this process as part of a comprehensive agreement.

#### **TOPICS**

## END NOTES

- 1.** The P5 1 and Iran reached agreement on a framework for a deal to halt and roll back Iran's nuclear weapons capability called the Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). United States Department of State, "Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program" April 2, 2015. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/04/240170.htm>.
- 2.** "Iran nuclear: No guarantee of final deal, Khamenei says," BBC News, April 9, 2015. Accessed June 19, 2015. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32231750>.
- 3.** International inspections would be conducted under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- 4.** European Union Press Office, "Joint Statement by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif," April 2, 2015. Accessed June 19, 2015. Available at: [http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150402\\_03\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150402_03_en.htm).
- 5.** The additional requirements are set out in the IAEA Additional Protocol. See also, "Translation of Iranian Fact Sheet on the Nuclear Negotiations," Harvard University Belfer Center, April 3, 2015. Accessed June 19, 2015. Available at: <http://iranmatters.belfercenter.org/blog/translation-iranian-factsheet-nuclear-negotiations>.

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<http://iranmatters.belfercenter.org/blog/translation-iranian-factsheet-nuclear-negotiations>; See also, Ramin Mostaghim and Paul Richter, "Iran's Khamenei adds a twist to tough terms for nuclear talks" *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 2015. Accessed June 19, 2015. Available at: <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-iran-nuclear-khamenei-20150409-story.html#page=1>.
7. "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran," International Atomic Energy Agency, February 26, 2006. Accessed June 19, 2015. Available at: <http://www.isisnucleariran.org/assets/pdf/iaea-iranreport-022706.pdf>.
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9. "Translation of Iranian Fact Sheet on the Nuclear Negotiations," Harvard University Belfer Center, April 3, 2015. Accessed June 19, 2015. Available at: <http://iranmatters.belfercenter.org/blog/translation-iranian-factsheet-nuclear-negotiations>.
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11. Louis Charbonneau, John Irish and Parisa Hafezi, "Exclusive - Six powers agree way to restore U.N. sanctions in push for Iran deal: sources," Reuters, May 31, 2015. Accessed June 19, 2015. Available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/05/31/uk-iran-nuclear-idUKKBN0OG05820150531>.