

Iran Gets Short End of Geneva Deal

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After all the gnashing of teeth, beating of breasts and tearing of hair coming from Israel and its American supporters, you'd think last week's nuclear deal in Geneva has opened the way for Iran to become a mighty nuclear weapons power.

Nonsense. Coolly examined, Tehran came off with the short end of the stick at the so-called P5 + 1 big power talks in Geneva. Here's why:

Bowing to intolerable sanctions and economic warfare from the US, Tehran agreed to limit uranium enrichment to only 5% (over 80% is needed to make a nuclear weapon). This low level is sufficiently only for power generation. Iran is to stop enriching to 20%, the level needed for medical isotopes.

Iran further agreed to halt construction of its Arak heavy water reactor that could eventually produce plutonium, a key nuclear weapons fuel. Tehran agreed not to build any new nuclear facilities, including next generation centrifuges, and grant daily access to UN nuclear inspectors at its top-secret Nantaz and Fordow plants. It will provide design plans for its Arak reactor.

In short, Iran freezes its modest nuclear program to the point where it can only be used for civilian energy purposes.

For these major concessions, Iran will be paid \$7 billion – of its own money, which has been frozen abroad by US-led sanctions. Some sanctions will be slightly eased. Iran will regain access to some of its gold and cash held abroad. But most of its \$ 100 billion in assets frozen abroad will remain blocked. Tehran will be able to sell modest amounts of oil at current restricted levels, and fund some Iranian students abroad. Big deal.

Iran will be finally allowed to buy some parts for its dilapidated civilian airliners that have become flying coffins because of sanctions. But, apparently, not new western aircraft.

The Geneva accord will last for 6 months, then be reviewed.

Given all the American and Israeli talk of war against Iran, it represents something of a triumph for US, Russian, EU and Chinese diplomacy. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry deserve kudos for engineering the deal – both the open one in Geneva, and the backroom talks run out of Oman.

Russia's deft Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also deserves applause, having contributed much diplomatic skill and intelligent policy to the negotiations.

There appears no way Iran could even come close to making a few nuclear weapons – or, for

that matter, delivered them at medium range. But that has not quieted the wailing and threats coming from Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, who has some 200 nuclear weapons tucked away in his basement. Or from America's pro-Israel lobby and its captive Republican Party.

As the great Israeli writer Uri Avnery observed, the US Congress would jump to repeal the Ten Commandments if so ordered by Israel.

We have been watching the ugly spectacle of Congressmen and Senators backing the harsh criticism of their president by Israel's Netanyahu. The US media has also been very biased against the Geneva deal. Yet in spite of this, a recent Pew poll found 44% of Americans supported the Geneva accords while only a small number opposed them.

While Iran has not benefitted from this deal, it has at least lessened the threat of attack. The Geneva accord may pave the way to a warming of relations with the west and America's final acceptance of the Islamic Republic as a legitimate Mideast presence. This prospect that has driven the Israelis and the Saudis into a towering rage.

The campaign to block the Geneva accords has thrust into the daylight the long-covert alliance between Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates on one hand, and Israel. Egypt and Jordan are also members of this anti-Iranian camp. The possible emergence of Iran from US-imposed isolation is already throwing the Mideast into convulsions.

We also witnessed at Geneva another example of the consummate, unblushing hypocrisy that makes France often less than loved. France, which has been selling arms to the Gulf Emirates and has a base in Abu Dhabi, held up the Iran deal claiming it would promote "nuclear proliferation." This is the same France that originally sold nuclear technology, weapons and missiles to Israel in the mid-1950's. Quel nerve!

Back in the US, having seen the full might of the pro-Israel lobby attacking their president and making Congress clap like circus seals, many Americans must be wondering if they have lost control of their nation's Mideast policy.

Polls show Americans certainly don't want to fight yet another war for Israel's benefit. PM Netanyahu has gone too far in trying to throw his weight around in America and in humiliated President Barack Obama.

His heavy-handed actions will remind many that the US Congress has been totally corrupted by big money and big media - and needs to be reformed.

As Ben Franklin said, "there is no bad peace; and no good war." So Geneva, however imperfect, is a step forward. Now, we will watch its foes move heaven and earth to sabotage these accords.

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