

Iran Pursues Comprehensive Solutions to the Global Crisis

by Hussein Askary and Michelle Rasmussen

Feb. 28—The Iranian government is seeking comprehensive solutions to many burning international issues, while at the same time, negotiating the specific matter of Iran's nuclear program and the harsh sanctions imposed on that nation, as the result of its defense of its right to nuclear technology. This was evident from statements made by Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Deputy Foreign Minister for European and North American Affairs, and a member of the Iranian P5+1 nuclear negotiating team, during a press conference attended by *EIR* in the Danish capital Copenhagen on Feb. 26.

However, the key issue in Iran's negotiations with the United States, as its main opponent among the P5+1 nations (5 Permanent Members of the UN Security Council plus Germany), is the lack of orientation and good will in policies pursued by the trans-Atlantic powers, headed by the United States and Britain. It is not the technical issues related to the Iranian nuclear program, on which both Iran and some members of the P5+1 nations have made concessions, to facilitate a general agreement, but the political games that are being played by the trans-Atlantic powers and their allies in Southwest Asia, such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the oil-rich countries neighboring Iran, which are creating obstacles.

Following the victory of President Dr. Hasan Rouhani in the elections of June 2013, there was a consensus among the leadership of the country, to make specific concessions in Iran's previous position, to order to reopen the deadlocked P5+1 process. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei gave President Rouhani a mandate to pursue these negotiations,

but warned that Iran would not accept any agreement that would not include the complete lifting of economic sanctions imposed on Iran by both the international community and the U.S. That remains the key issue.

When the Iranian negotiating team, which included Foreign Minister Mohammad Jawad Zarif and Takht-Ravanchi, reached the Interim Agreement in Geneva on Nov. 24, 2013, Iran cleared up many of the disputed technical issues. The agreement provided that:

- All uranium enriched beyond 5% will either be diluted or converted to uranium oxide. No new uranium at the 3.5% enrichment level will be added to Iran's current stock.
- No new centrifuges will be installed or prepared for installation.
- 50% of the centrifuges at the Natanz enrichment facility and 75% at the Fordow enrichment facility will be left inoperable. Iran will not use its advanced IR-2 centrifuges for enrichment.

• Iran will not develop any new uranium enrichment or nuclear reprocessing facilities.

• No fuel will be produced, tested, or transferred to the Arak nuclear power plant. In addition, Iran will share design details of the reactor.

• The IAEA will be granted daily access to Natanz and Fordow, with certain sites monitored by 24-hour cameras. The IAEA will also have access to Iran's uranium mines and centrifuge production facilities.

In return, Iran was relieved from certain financial sanctions, and the ability to get spare parts for Iranian civilian airplanes was granted.



Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for European and American Affairs told a press conference in Copenhagen Feb. 26 that the country is committed to reaching a negotiated settlement with the P5+1 on its nuclear program, but the U.S. and its allies are blocking such an agreement.



Iranian Students News Agency

Iran cleared up many of the disputed technical issues concerning its nuclear program in the Geneva Agreement reached in November 2013. Shown, the reactor building of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant.

Intense Negotiations

The Geneva agreement stipulated that the parties would reach a comprehensive agreement within six months. But when that deadline was missed, a new one was established. The next deadline, before which, especially the U.S. and Iran should reach an agreement, is March 31. Iranian and American negotiators have been meeting regularly and intensively in the past few months.

However, it is in Washington and the U.S. Congress, not in Geneva or Tehran, that major obstacles exist. The Obama Administration's policy of regime change in Southwest Asia, aimed at almost every nation, especially Iran's allies, and the continued support by the U.S. and its allies to train, arm, and finance terrorist groups targeting many nations of the region, are seriously compromising the negotiations. While President Obama, for his own reasons, is eager to make a deal with Iran, Congressional opponents of the deal are creating further complications.

The Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu is hell-bent on destroying the Iranian nuclear program, and threatening to spark a nuclear war in the region and the world by attacking Iran. U.S. House Speaker John Boehner's invitation for Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress March 3 will likely further energize

the large faction of the U.S. Congress that wants to impose more sanctions and block any agreement with Tehran. Netanyahu, who is facing a tough election on March 17, is making his last push to lobby the U.S. Congress to block a final agreement later this month—and hoping that his bravado, opposed by a vocal section of the Israeli security establishment, will help his re-election chances.

Prior to the press conference, Takht-Ravanchi had met with Danish Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard; their discussion centered on combatting terrorism in the aftermath

of the terror attack in Copenhagen on Feb. 14-15, which left three people dead—one person during an attack at a “freedom of expression” meeting; a Jewish security guard killed in front of the main synagogue; and later, the terrorist himself, who was killed by the police.

At the press conference, questions focused on the nuclear negotiations, about which the Iranian official would not go into details, but he stressed that the sanctions against Iran ought to be lifted. Issues of terrorism, and the advance of terrorist groups such as ISIS in Syria and Iraq were also discussed. (The full press conference is available at <http://schillerinstitut.dk/si/?p=5157>)

Dialogue with Takht-Ravanchi

EIR's Michelle Rasmussen broadened the discussion by presenting China's New Silk Road plan and the BRICS dynamic for peace through economic development. Here are excerpts from the discussion:

EIR: In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the New Silk Road Economic Belt, a policy of infrastructure and for an economic development corridor, all the way from China to Europe, which the Chinese call a “win-win” policy. This policy was proposed by *EIR*, and advanced by the BRICS, including the

Russian-Afghan infrastructure peace plan. As for Iran, the Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan rail link was completed in 2014, and the Chinese are financing the Tehran-Mashhad line, as well as others. How do you see the role of Iran in the New Silk Road development strategy?

Takht-Ravanchi: It is an important undertaking by Iran and other countries along the Silk Road. We think that if we can establish such a road, and if we can strengthen cooperation with countries along this road, naturally, a huge number of people can benefit from such an exercise.

First, let me say that Iran is located in a very strategic area. In the south, we have the Persian Gulf, which is a natural way to the high seas. In the north, we have not only the Caspian Sea, but a number of Central Asian republics which are eager to get access to the high seas, which, at the same time, want to diversify their contacts, not only to the east, but to the west as well. So Iran can be a transit road for these countries to send their exports to Europe, and get their imports from Europe and the east, through the territory of Iran.

So we have established a good link connecting the

northern border, the northeast of Iran, to Bandar Abbas in the Persian Gulf area. That gives us the opportunity to help these countries in the north to have access to the high seas, whether they want to go eastward to Japan and China, or if they want to go westward towards Europe. So this is one project.

I was saying that making a good link between Iran and these Central Asian Republics to China, will definitely benefit millions of people along that road. It is in our interest, and we have spent a good amount of time and energy to reach that point: We are in close contact with our Chinese friends, with Central Asian friends, so we can materialize such a project.

Financing Terrorism

EIR also asked a question about financing terrorism, stating that there is a group of U.S. Congressmen who are trying to get the classified 28 pages of the report of the Joint Congressional Inquiry on 9/11 released, which point to the role of Saudi Arabia in financing that attack. The question was: What do you think needs to be done to prevent the financing of the terrorism?


Takht-Ravanchi: It's a real great challenge that all of us face. As you know, there are attempts by different individuals and countries to continue supporting, financially, the terrorists who are active in Syria and Iraq. There are resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council demanding that countries and individuals not provide financial support for terrorists, but, unfortunately, this channel of sending money to individuals is still going on. I think that the Security Council has the responsibility to honor its resolutions, the provisions of a number of resolutions which have called for the cessation of funding of the terrorists should be observed, and the Security Council should devise mechanisms to prevent the occurrence of this money being transferred to the terrorists.

As long as the funding is going on, I am afraid that the terrorism will continue to inflict casualties on innocent people inside Iraq, inside Syria, in Europe, and in other places. If they are not denied such access, we cannot claim that we are sincere in our efforts to fight the terrorists by all means available to us. And, as I said, there is a legal responsibility on the part of the members of the Security Council, in particular, the Permanent Members, to honor their undertakings, which are stipulated in the Security Council resolutions, to prevent the transfer of money being made to the terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

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