

Iran and the United States— There Is Still a Chance for Diplomacy

by Dr. Hossein Mousavian

April 3—Dr. Seyed Hossein Mousavian, former Iranian Ambassador to Germany (1990-1997), longtime scholar and expert in international relations, is currently Middle East Security and Nuclear Policy Specialist at Princeton University. He briefed the International Peace Coalition (online) on March 28. It was the [95th consecutive weekly meeting](#) of the group, initiated by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder and leader of the Schiller Institute. They exchanged views on the La-Rouche Oasis Plan. The following is an edited transcript.



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Schiller Institute

Minister Netanyahu visited him in the White House; at the same time it was announced.

The second problem is, in the memorandum, he is not talking only about nuclear. He is talking about all the disputed issues between Iran and the U.S., like regional issues, like terrorism, like human rights, even Iranian defense and military capabilities, and so on. But, when I was comparing the 12-point list of [Secretary of State] Mike Pompeo during the first term of President Trump—Pompeo presented the 12 points as conditions to negoti-

ate with Iran—I saw exactly all 12 points in the same memorandum President Trump signed in 2025. But, it was not only the memorandum. President Trump immediately started to implement a wide range of sanctions on Iran.

Trump's Letter to the Supreme Leader

Nevertheless, in mid-March he sent a letter to the Iranian Supreme Leader. Israeli sources revealed that the letter is threatening, and that President Trump has given a two-month deadline to the Iranian side: either agreement or war.

The other problem is the contradictory statements we are hearing from top Trump officials. Steve Witkoff, Trump's representative on Middle East issues, had an interview; it was very positive. He said we are not after war. We are just, on the nuclear [issue], we are for a verification program to show that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear bomb, and so. Immediately, Trump's National Security Advisor, Mike Waltz, said the goal remains full disarmament, and dismantling, full dismantling. It means Iran should dismantle all of the enrichment program, which is impossible with these policies President Trump showed, in practice, after he took office. Then Iran announced that Iran is not going to engage in direct

I was asked by Helga if I could give a short talk about the latest situation between Iran and the U.S., the possibility of war, and the nuclear dossier.

With President Trump—actually the last three months, we have been facing two different Trumps: one before the election and taking office, and one after the election. Before taking office, President Trump made multiple positive statements. First of all, he reiterated that his policy in the second term would be very different from the first term. He cares about the Iranian nation. He wished even success for the Iranian Supreme Leader, and insisted that he is after a peaceful deal and diplomacy with Iran. And more importantly, he said his only issue is, Iran should not have the nuclear bomb.

With these statements, Iranian authorities also responded positively, and they said they preferred diplomacy, and that they are ready to engage with the U.S., negotiate with the U.S., even directly, to resolve suspicions or misunderstandings about the nuclear problem.

But in practice, we have a different President Trump after he took office on January 20, 2025. Just two weeks after being in office, he signed a memorandum reinstating the maximum pressure policy of his first term in 2017-2021. Surprisingly, this was signed when Prime

negotiations; however, Iran would be open to continue indirect negotiations.

The issue of the Iranian nuclear program has been escalated by the IAEA. On February 8, the IAEA reported the Iranian stockpile of 60% enriched uranium has reached 275 kg, which the specialists say is enough for two or three bombs.

Nevertheless, Tulsi Gabbard, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, just some days ago, said the U.S. assessment says that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapon at the moment, and Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has not authorized any nuclear weapon program in Iran.

In December 2024, three EU countries, Germany, France, and the UK, informed the UN Security Council that they will use, unilaterally, a snapback mechanism [reimposition of UN sanctions against Iran]. Russia has argued that the EU lacks the legal authority to unilaterally trigger the snapback. And, simultaneously, Russia, Iran, and China have established a group of three, negotiating the possibility of a nuclear deal; and in an official statement, they have opposed the European and American policy on the Iranian nuclear program.

Iran's Letter in Response to Trump

Just two days ago, the Iranian Supreme Leader responded to President Trump's letter. For me, maybe five points are interesting, regarding this letter.

One, in the first term of President Trump, the Japanese Prime Minister paid a visit to Iran, met Ayatollah Khamenei, and delivered the message of President Trump. In time, Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal, assassinated General Soleimani; and then Ayatollah Khamenei said that he was not going to respond to President Trump. And he publicly said Trump was not worthy of a reply. But this time, Ayatollah Khamenei responded to President Trump, which is a positive point.

The second issue is that although President Trump's letter was delivered by the U.A.E., Iran's response was delivered via Oman. Iran wanted to show that they do not trust the U.A.E., because the United Arab Emirates



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Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

is an ally of Israel and they initiated the Abraham Accords, and so on. Iran just wanted to show distrust, and show that they do not like Abu Dhabi to be engaged in Tehran-Washington relations.

The third point is that Iran announced, they are not ready for direct negotiations with the U.S. under the current policy of sanctions and pressures and threats. But they will engage in indirect negotiations; and if there is progress, they will go for direct negotiations with the U.S. If there is no progress, there is no need for direct negotiations.

As I understand it, Iran has responded positively to every positive point of President Trump's letter, and they have made mutual counter-threats to every threaten-

ing point of President Trump's letter.

A lot of people are asking now if there are going to be indirect negotiations. Who will be the mediator? I think Oman and then Russia; they have a higher chance to be mediators.

Danger of War

About the signs of possibility of war, Helga mentioned some points. I do not want to go into details. The first sign is that we notice the warmongers have again become active. Prime Minister Netanyahu is doing everything in his power to use Trump's error to drag the U.S. into a war with Iran. Neoconservative voices, who pushed the U.S. into the Iraq War, are calling for a strike on Iran—groups like FDD [Foundation for Defense of Democracies], the Israeli lobby, and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy [WINEP], are once again promoting war with Iran, claiming there may be never a better time to attack Iran, because now Iran is rich. However, President Trump and Ayatollah Khamenei, they both publicly have said they are opposing war. This is good that the two leaders are opposing war. But the problem we have is that the Trump administration is not united. It is disputed whether we should go to war or have diplomacy.

Arab countries, Russia, China, India, the international community, they are all against war. But with the following issues which I am going to review with you,

I think there is a possibility of military conflict between Iran and the U.S.

First, the new wave of U.S.-Israeli regional attacks. President Trump initiated a new, extensive military operation against the Houthis, and declared that Iran would be held responsible for any attacks by the Houthis on U.S. or NATO facilities.

Second, Netanyahu violated the Gaza ceasefire agreement and launched military attacks against Palestinians. As you know, hundreds of people have been killed during the last two, three weeks. And simultaneously, Prime Minister Netanyahu launched a military strike on Lebanon and Syria. I mean, he is fighting on three fronts; I should add also Yemen—four fronts.

Trump provided Netanyahu with weapons that the previous U.S. Administration had refused to supply; \$4 billion of assistance, which includes over 35,000 general-purpose bomb casings for 2,000-lb. bombs, and 4,000 bunker-buster 2,000-lb. bombs, which it said could be used against Iranian nuclear facilities.

The next issue is the reality of the military build-up. Helga mentioned that the USS *Carl Vinson* aircraft carrier is on its way to South Asia. And we have read the news that two other U.S. aircraft carriers are also ready to be employed. The U.S. has deployed something between three to seven B-2 bombers to Diego Garcia in



U.S. DOD

The USS Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group, now headed to the Middle East.

the middle of the Indian Ocean. In response, Iran has reinforced its defense systems and deployed advanced missiles. Iran, Russia, and China had joint military exercises in the Gulf of Oman, showing off their military ties.

The next issue, the reality is, again, a race between sanctions and the nuclear issue. The U.S. is increasing sanctions and pressures, and in return Iran is ramping up its nuclear activities and missile deployment.

The next issue is the reality of the diplomatic ultimatum. You have read a lot that Trump has given a two-month ultimatum to Iran, and the reality of the time limit we have, because we have October 2025, which is a period when the United Nations Security Council [Resolution 2231](#) [endorsing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015] is going to be terminated. And if the Europeans want—and they have already informed the United Nations Security Council—they can use a snapback mechanism. If they use it, Iran has officially informed the EU that they will withdraw from the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty].

You can imagine, with such a regional situation, if the Europeans are going to use a snapback, re-imposing all international sanctions on Iran, and Iran is going to withdraw from the NPT, this would really escalate the possibility of war.



Public Domain

U.S. F-35 fighter jets. The U.S. has been bombing the Houthis in Yemen.

Chance for Diplomacy

However, there is a chance for diplomacy. In my [recent op-ed](#) I published in *Middle East Eye*, I explained the factors President Trump can use in order to have a successful diplomacy with Iran. I'm just going to review with you, to share with you the outlines:

First of all, I have insisted on the necessity of mutual respect, if they really want to start a good negotiation.

Second, there is a need for consistency between American words and American actions. They cannot in words call for diplomacy, and in action go for sanctions, threats, humiliation, or military escalation.

Third, a deal should be based on international rules, because the U.S. has shown under President Trump that they do not respect international rules, like their withdrawal from the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] Iran nuclear deal, which was a clear violation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. If they want a deal, the criteria should be international rules, not something beyond international rules.

And the deal should consist of the concerns of both sides, not only the U.S. concerns; the Iranians also have their own concerns. They both should agree they would negotiate on the concerns of the other side.

The fifth issue is about the sustainability of the deal. That is really a question. Even if there is a deal, even if there is a negotiation, even if there would be an agreement between Iran and the U.S. under President Trump, what is the assurance and guarantee that the next U.S. President, again, would not kill the deal, like what President Trump did in his previous administration? The other point is that they should discuss all the issues, but it doesn't mean they should have comprehensive agreement. They need a direct and comprehensive agenda—not comprehensive agreement, because it is impossible to agree on everything in a short period. They need to start with the nuclear issue, and then go to the second one.

Proposal for Talks: 'Two Lists'

For this, I have proposed that Iran and the U.S. should have two lists: one list of disputed issues, and one list about the issues of interest. Because Iran and



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Iran's Chabahar port, the kind of development needed in Southwest Asia.

the U.S. have many disputed issues, but they also have a lot of issues on which they really have common interests. They should go for implementation in a phased approach. While they are negotiating on the nuclear issue, they should start cooperation on one of the shared and common interest issues, as a confidence-building measure. I mean, the best way to build confidence is to cooperate on the common interests, the shared interests, while they are negotiating the disputed issues. This is the formula on which I have been insisting for years, but unfortunately nobody is listening.

And the other suggestion is for Iran and the U.S. to negotiate on a big economic package, because I believe economic cooperation is a good opening between the two countries, and really can ease the tensions and facilitate broader issues, including the regional issues. If they have a big economic agreement on the use of dollars, they are not going to kill each other in the Middle East. I think they would go for more economic cooperation. And then I have always been insisting on the necessity of people-to-people relations. I mean, the Americans and the Iranian nation, they are not enemies of each other. They have never been enemies of each other. The states, yes—they have a problem and hostilities, but the people, they don't have a problem together. That's why President Trump and the Iranian administration should open the door for people-to-people relations, like sports, like science, like academic relations, arts, culture, consular exchanges, and so on.

And the last one, about the region, since there is a lot of talk about Iran-U.S. disputes on regional issues, I believe four principles would be extremely important, if they want to have a regional compromise. One, Iran and

the U.S. should mutually respect the legitimate interest and role of each other in the region, and they should not confront each other on the other side's interests.

Second, there is a necessity to contain military conflict between Israel and Iran. Third, we need to have a two-state solution [for Palestine and Israel], in order to finish the old Arab-Israeli 80-year-old conflict.

And finally, we need to have a new structure between Iran and the Arab-U.S. allies in the Persian Gulf, Iran, GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] countries, and Iraq, to have a new cooperation system, like the European Union, which we have had in the last 50 years, which has been really successful. I mean, in this case, with this initiative, I think this is also the best way to end decades of Persian-Arab disputes. Thank you.

Exchange with Zepp-LaRouche—Oasis Plan

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: There were many interesting things said. I would like to thank Hossein for having given us such a comprehensive assessment. I would like to just suggest one thing, since you mentioned in the very end that economic cooperation between Iran and the United States could actually play a positive role in confidence building and so forth. Maybe Iran should

promote the [Oasis Plan](#) as a comprehensive approach for the entire situation. I would like to get your comments on that.

Mousavian: Helga, I agree with you. The Oasis Plan already is a really good case for every Middle Eastern country to invest, to support, and to go for it; including Iran.

The reason I mentioned the economic cooperation is that, for President Trump, big economic trade agreements always have been a priority. For the Iranian side, after 40 years under sanctions and pressures, they have tremendous capacity for reconstruction and reconstructing the country. Europe and the U.S. have a huge history, big possibilities, golden opportunities to engage with Iran on hundreds of billions of dollars of economic cooperation, rather than always threatening, provoking mutual blame.

That's why I mentioned it as one of the important issues in order to reconstruct Iran-U.S. relations. However, the Oasis Plan would be one of those. I definitely agree with you, Helga. It should be supported *regionally*, because the Oasis Plan is, practically, a regional plan in which many countries should be involved.

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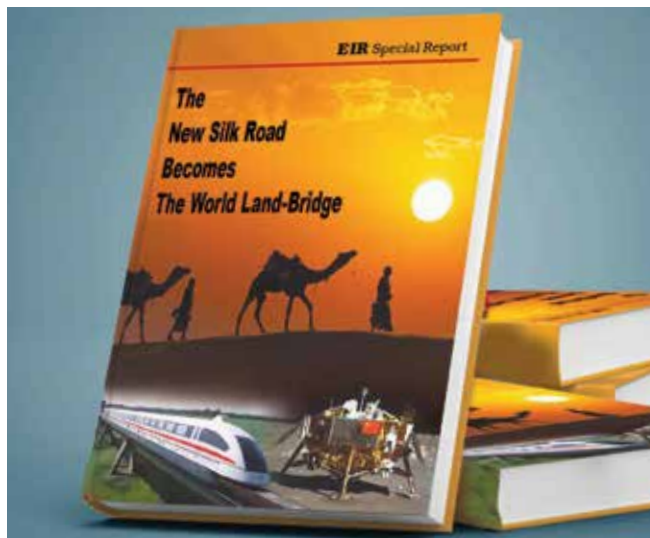
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