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Article 1.

NYT

Getting to Yes With Iran

The Editorial Board

November 24, 2013 -- The interim nuclear deal between Iran and the major powers is an important step toward resolving the increasingly dangerous dispute over Iran's progress on production of a nuclear weapon. President Obama and President Hassan Rouhani of Iran deserve credit for resisting fierce domestic opposition and a 30-year history of animosity between the two countries to get to this point.

Even though the temporary agreement does not achieve permanent and total dismantlement of Iran's nuclear program, no one can seriously argue that it doesn't make the world safer.

It would freeze key aspects of Iran's program for six months and lay the ground for negotiating a comprehensive, permanent deal. The alternatives are ratcheting up sanctions and possible military action, with no assurance that those steps would stop Iran's nuclear advances. A negotiated solution is unquestionably better; it is alarming to hear Israeli politicians reject it in extremist terms and threaten unspecified unilateral action. The deal buys time to work on a long-term solution that constrains Iran's nuclear program and guarantees that it is put to peaceful use. That will be even harder to achieve, and the risks will be even greater, if negotiations fail. It is crucial that talks on the next phase begin very soon since the next six months will fly by.

As with any deal between adversaries, caution is warranted. Iran kept the nuclear program secret for nearly two decades before it was uncovered in 2002 and has resisted full disclosure of its activities. But the interim deal has protections that should make cheating harder, including unprecedented daily inspections of enrichment facilities at Natanz and Fordo by United Nations experts.

Iran has agreed to stop enriching uranium beyond 5 percent, a level sufficient for energy production but not bomb-making, and will dismantle links between networks of centrifuges. While Iran can still enrich below 5 percent, it must convert new enriched uranium to oxide so it is harder to use militarily. Its stockpile of uranium enriched to 20 percent, which is close to weapons-grade, would be diluted or converted into oxide. Iran agreed not to install new centrifuges, start up ones not already operating or build new enrichment facilities. Much of the work on the plutonium reactor near Arak, which could provide a second path to a bomb, would be halted. The two sides effectively put aside

the question of whether Iran has a “right” to enrich, but that will be central to any final deal.

In exchange, America and its allies have offered “limited, temporary and reversible” sanctions relief — enough so President Rouhani can show his people benefits for Iran’s concessions but far from all that Iran has lost. The interim deal would provide \$6 billion to \$7 billion in sanctions relief, including freeing up about \$4.2 billion in oil revenue that is frozen in foreign banks. Even so, Iran would still be deprived of \$30 billion in oil revenue over the next six months. American officials say that if Iran cheats on the interim terms or fails to reach a final agreement, the eased sanctions will be reversed and new and tougher ones imposed. The perils ahead are many, including adamant objections from Israel and Saudi Arabia, which oppose re-establishment of relations between America and Iran. The major powers have promised Iran that new sanctions will not be imposed during the interim deal. But key Senate Democrats said they plan to push for new penalties, though those would probably not be effective for six months to give diplomacy a chance. That is not a lot of time, but the new agreement offers more hope than ever before that the United States and Iran can find common ground.

[Article 2.](#)

Wall Street Journal

Iran's Nuclear Triumph

Editorial

Nov. 24, 2013 -- President Obama is hailing a weekend accord that he says has "halted the progress of the Iranian nuclear program," and we devoutly wish this were true. The reality is that the agreement in Geneva with five Western nations takes Iran a giant step closer to becoming a de facto nuclear power.

Start with the fact that this "interim" accord fails to meet the terms of several United Nations resolutions, which specify no sanctions relief until Iran suspends all uranium enrichment. Under this deal Iran gets sanctions relief, but it does not have to give up its centrifuges that enrich uranium, does not have to stop enriching, does not have to transfer control of its enrichment stockpiles, and does not have to shut down its plutonium reactor at Arak.

Mr. Obama's weekend statement glossed over these canyon-sized holes. He said Iran "cannot install or start up new centrifuges," but it already has about 10,000 operational centrifuges that it can continue to spin for at least another six months. Why does Tehran need so many centrifuges if not to make a bomb at the time it pleases?

The President also said that "Iran has committed to halting certain levels of enrichment and neutralizing part of its stockpiles." He is referring to an Iranian pledge to oxidize its 20% enriched uranium stockpile. But this too is less than reassuring because the process can be reversed and Iran retains a capability to enrich to 5%, which used to be a threshold we didn't accept because it can easily be reconverted to 20%.

Mr. Obama said "Iran will halt work at its plutonium reactor," but Iran has only promised not to fuel the reactor even as it can continue other work at the site. That is far from dismantling what is nothing more than a bomb factory. North Korea made similar promises in a similar deal with Condoleezza Rice during the final Bush years, but it quickly returned to bomb-making.

As for inspections, Mr. Obama hailed "extensive access" that will "allow the international community to verify whether Iran is keeping its commitments." One problem is that Iran hasn't ratified the additional protocol to its International Atomic Energy Agency agreement that would allow inspections on demand at such sites as Parchin, which remain off limits. Iran can also oust U.N. inspectors at any time, much as North Korea did.

Then there is the sanctions relief, which Mr. Obama says is only "modest" but which reverses years of U.S. diplomacy to tighten and enforce them. The message is that the sanctions era is over. The loosening of the oil regime is especially pernicious, inviting China, India and Germany to get back to business with Iran.

We are told that all of these issues will be negotiated as part of a "final" accord in the next six months, but that is not how arms control works. It is far more likely that this accord will set a precedent for a series of temporary deals in which the West will gradually ease more sanctions in return for fewer Iranian concessions.

Iran will threaten to walk away from the talks without new concessions, and Mr. Obama will not want to acknowledge that his diplomatic achievement wasn't real. The history of arms

control is that once it is underway the process dominates over substance, and a Western leader who calls a halt is denounced for risking war. The negotiating advantage lies with the dictatorship that can ignore domestic opinion.

Mr. Obama all but admitted this himself by noting that "only diplomacy can bring about a durable solution to the challenge posed by Iran's nuclear program." He added that "I have a profound responsibility to try to resolve our differences peacefully, rather than rush towards conflict." Rush to conflict? Iran's covert nuclear program was uncovered a decade ago, and the West has been desperately trying to avoid military action.

The best that can be said is that the weekend deal slows for a few weeks Iran's rapid progress to a nuclear breakout. But the price is that at best it sets a standard that will allow Iran to become a nuclear-capable regime that stops just short of exploding a bomb. At worst, it will allow Iran to continue to cheat and explode a bomb whenever it is strategically convenient to serve its goal of dominating the Middle East.

This seems to be the conclusion in Tehran, where Foreign Minister Javad Zarif boasted that the deal recognizes Iran's right to enrich uranium while taking the threat of Western military action off the table. Grand Ayatollah Ali Khomeini also vouchsafed his approval, only days after he denounced the U.S. and called Jews "rabid dogs."

Israel has a different view of the deal, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling it a "historic mistake." He and his cabinet will now have to make their own calculations about the risks of unilateral military action. Far from having Israel's back,

as Mr. Obama likes to say, the U.S. and Europe are moving to a strategy of trying to contain Israel rather than containing Iran. The French also fell into line as we feared they would under U.S. and media pressure.

Mr. Obama seems determined to press ahead with an Iran deal regardless of the details or damage. He views it as a legacy project. A President has enormous leeway on foreign policy, but Congress can signal its bipartisan unhappiness by moving ahead as soon as possible to strengthen sanctions. Mr. Obama warned Congress not to do so in his weekend remarks, but it is the only way now to stop the President from accommodating a nuclear Iran.

[Article 3.](#)

The Atlantic

Is the Iran Deal Obama's Nixon-in-China Moment?

Michael Hirsh

Nov 24 2013 -- What's the best evidence that things are really changing in the Mideast? It is the spectacle of Israel and Saudi Arabia, hitherto America's two closest allies in the region, glowering darkly on the sidelines (and more or less in unison) as

the United States and Iran begin an engagement that is already more profound than anything we've seen since the Iranian revolution of 1979.

This historic shift, punctuated by the signing Saturday of a six-month, nuclear-freeze deal that both Israel and Saudi Arabia had loudly opposed, could potentially transform the entire region. If the rapprochement between Washington and Tehran continues—a very big if—it could open new doors to the resolution of long-festered conflicts that have left the two countries on the opposite side of bloody divides in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and even the Israeli-Palestinian issue, altering the strategic landscape in a way not seen, perhaps, since President Nixon blindsided the Soviets by making friends with Communist China at the height of the Cold War.

What is most striking about Saturday's agreement is that the Obama Administration appears to be declaring partial independence from the policy of Israel and Saudi Arabia, whose hard-line stances toward Iran have seriously constrained U.S. action, especially over the last decade. "Finally, the dog wags the tail. Tough luck for Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu!" says Fawaz Gerges, a scholar of the Middle East at the London School of Economics and author of the recent book *The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in the Arab World*.

Indeed, to the extent that Netanyahu continues to rail against the deal as he did again this weekend—calling it a "historic mistake"—he will likely only marginalize himself. The immediate reaction of the Saudis was far more muted, although Riyadh is equally worried about the U.S. shift. To be sure, both

the Saudis, with their oil leverage, and the Israelis, with powerful friends on Capitol Hill, can be expected to try every means to derail the U.S.-Iran rapprochement, but those efforts are likely to be neutralized for the moment if Iran follows through on its six-month commitments to stop production of medium-enriched uranium, make no "further advances of its activities" at the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant, the hardened underground Fordow facility and the Arak plutonium plant, and open its most-secret facilities to unprecedented inspection.

There is, of course, a very long way from here to there. The freeze deal is also disconcertingly vague on what happens after six months, which is the most glaring lacuna in the pact. Iran committed itself to diluting or converting its entire stockpile of uranium that has been enriched to 20 percent, in other words a step below weapons grade. But if talks go awry both sides could reverse themselves without too much difficulty. Iran could unfreeze enrichment as well as reactivate and build more centrifuges, and the United States and "P5 Plus One"—the U.S., Britain, France, Russia, China, and Germany—could re-impose the tiny measure of sanctions (about \$7 billion worth) they have agreed to lift.

The two sides are already disagreeing over whether the pact gives Iran the "right" to enrich (for ostensibly peaceful purposes). Iran is also being permitted to keep its current centrifuges although it must partially deactivate the ones that are running. But full dismantlement is not yet on the table, along with Iran's research and development program. "After the six months deal, will Iran have 5,000 IR1 centrifuges or will it have 20,000—they couldn't agree on that," says David Albright, a widely respected expert on Iran's nuclear program who runs the

Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security. "It's a little less settled than I would have hoped."

Despite these doubts, it is worth noting that during the 10-year period of failed negotiation dating from 2003, when President George W. Bush torpedoed his own diplomats' efforts at rapprochement by carelessly declaring Tehran to be part of an "axis of evil," Iran has gone from running 164 centrifuges at a single pilot plant to some 19,000. The international sanctions by themselves, no matter how harsh they have grown, were not enough to stop that progress, only to bring Tehran tentatively to the table. The pact will, for the first time, halt that aggressive building program and, just as importantly, perhaps shore up the political position of the Iranian moderates who were silenced for most of that decade.

If the United States and Iran can build on this potential rapprochement, it "will likely redraw the geostrategic architecture in the Gulf and the Middle East," says Gerges. A lot could become possible that was not before. In Syria, Bashar al-Assad is gaining ground and refusing to talk to the rebels largely because of the help he's getting from Iran-backed Hezbollah troops. In increasingly violence-wracked Iraq, Shiite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki feels he has a freer hand to sideline Sunnis (thereby giving new life to al-Qaeda in Iraq) because of support from Tehran, to which Maliki is also granting overflight rights for weapons supplies into Syria. If post-2014 Afghanistan is to gain any stability, Iran must be induced to resume its formerly hostile relationship with the Sunni Taliban in the West. And if Iran can be persuaded to further distance itself from Hamas (Tehran reportedly slashed funding in anger after Hamas moved its headquarters from Damascus to Qatar) and at least

quiet its anti-Israel rhetoric, that would make a Palestinian peace deal more possible.

For Obama, the domestic politics are perilous, of course, just as they were in 1972 for Nixon, who had to face harsh recriminations from his former fellow anti-communist colleagues on Capitol Hill and the powerful anti-détente lobby. Yet Nixon too saw the need to break through a geopolitical situation that was frozen in place for more than a decade. "In Asia, the United States was stuck with a China policy that obliged it to act as though Chiang [Kai-shek] and the other losers of the Chinese civil war were someday going to retake the mainland. The United States was enmeshed in a war in Vietnam that was costing up to 15,000 lives a year," James Mann wrote in his 1999 book *About Face*. "Nixon's initiative was aimed at breaking all of these shackles and creating a world in which American foreign policy would have greater flexibility."

In the end, the latest attempt could come down to whether Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry can create a kind of cold peace in the region—a verifiable if informal mutual reassurance pact between Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. Israel needs to be reassured that Iran is not hell-bent on destroying it with a nuclear bomb; and Saudi Arabia that it doesn't need start up its own nuclear weapons program to counter Tehran's. But the hardest sell of all may be left to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif and other moderates, who must persuade Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and other hardliners that Tehran can keep at least some of its nuclear-energy program—and its dignity—while stopping verifiably short of the bomb.

Michael Hirsh is chief correspondent for National Journal.

Article 4.

The Daily Beast

Why the Iranian Nuclear Deal Is Dangerous

Eli Lake

November 24th 2013 -- There's a reason Iran's foreign minister has been smiling—he finally got the world's great powers to sign a deal that lets Iran enrich uranium.

For years the United States has pressed other countries to support and enforce U.N. Security Council resolutions that demand Iran stop all of its enrichment activities and enter negotiations. On Sunday morning in Geneva, U.S. negotiators signed an interim agreement that would tolerate “a mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution” for Iran, according to the text of the deal.

The agreement signed in Geneva says Iran and six world powers will negotiate over the next six months “would involve a mutually defined enrichment program with practical limits and transparency measures to ensure the peaceful nature of the program.”

To be sure, the idea that Iran would be able to enrich uranium after a final status deal has been floated in negotiations for the last two years. But the offer represents a significant softening of earlier demands from the United States and even the Obama administration. During his first term, Obama offered Iran a deal that would have required Iran to import enriched nuclear fuel, but not allow Iran to make that fuel in facilities its government controlled.

The agreement in Geneva is meant to build trust between Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom as their diplomats hammer out a final agreement to end Iran's quest for a nuclear weapon. For now, the world is offering Iran modest sanctions relief in exchange for more transparency regarding its program and an agreement to cap its stockpile of enriched uranium during the talks.

Already this language has drawn fire from top Republicans. In a statement Sunday morning, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) said, "The text of the interim agreement with Iran explicitly and dangerously recognizes that Iran will be allowed to enrich uranium when it describes a 'mutually defined enrichment program' in a final, comprehensive deal. It is clear why the Iranians are claiming this deal recognizes their right to enrich."

On a phone call with reporters Saturday evening, senior administration officials said the deal did not recognize Iran's right to enrichment and that limitations on Iran's enrichment would be negotiated over the next six months.

David Albright, a former weapons inspector and the president of

the Institute for Science and International Security, said the document does not explicitly acknowledge that Iran has a right to enrich uranium, the process for creating the fuel needed for a peaceful nuclear reactor and also a nuclear weapon. But he also said he was troubled that the language on enrichment was so vague.

“I would have hoped some of the parameters were clarified in the initial deal,” he said. “How many centrifuges are we talking about? Is it 18,000 or 3,000? How long will these limitations last, five years or twenty years?”

Since 2005, when Iran began spinning centrifuges at Natanz, a facility first disclosed to the public by an Iranian opposition group known as the People’s Mujahedin, the U.S. has called on Iran to stop enrichment altogether. Under the Bush administration, the U.S. declined to even negotiate at first with Iran so long as it continued to enrich uranium.

Over time that condition for the United States melted away. But even President Obama has said that he does not recognize Iran’s right to enrich uranium under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Robert Zarate, the policy director for the Foreign Policy Initiative, a think tank that has supported more sanctions on Iran, said the deal signed in Geneva was dangerous. “We’re another step closer to a nuclear-1914 scenario in the Middle East or elsewhere,” Zarate said. “If we cannot say ‘no’ to Iran -- a country, by the way, that’s repeatedly violated the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, international nuclear inspections and U.N. Security Council resolutions -- then good luck getting

countries who haven't broken any rules, including some of America's allies and partners, to refrain from getting enrichment and reprocessing or, perhaps eventually, nuclear weapons."

[Article 5.](#)

NYT

U.S. Allies Need Reassurance on Iran

Steven L. Spiegel

November 24, 2013 -- The interim agreement with Iran over its nuclear program may or may not represent a breakthrough in the longer and more difficult talks to continue for the next six months. In either case, the United States must address a critical requirement for success: Assuaging the deep fears in Israel and Saudi Arabia that Iran would try to violate any final agreement.

Even before it was agreed to, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel scathingly dismissed an outline of the initial accord as an "historic mistake." The Saudis, Iran's major regional rival, are equally unwilling to think that Iran would keep any promises it might make. So time is short for the United States to address these apprehensions before they further fray America's relations with its closest allies in the Middle East.

One strategy might reassure America's allies, and the United States should adopt it now: Alongside any further agreement reached with Iran about halting or rolling back its nuclear program, offer Israel and the Arab states a network of treaties or

other formal commitments guaranteeing that an attack by Iran on any of those countries would be considered an attack on the United States.

That would be similar to the message President John F. Kennedy broadcast during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, when he warned the Soviets not to allow any nuclear missile to be launched from Cuba against any country in the Western Hemisphere. President Obama should offer a similarly strong deterrent now.

To some extent, American security guarantees, especially to Israel and the Saudis, are already implicit. But new, firmer assurances, especially if codified in a treaty, would make a huge difference. They would be permanent and unmistakable, and reassure America's allies that the United States would not waver in a crisis, no matter who was in the White House. Even more important, they would sharply reduce the chance of miscalculations by Iran; its leaders could not delude themselves into thinking that there would be no consequences if they attacked one of their neighbors — the kind of misapprehension under which North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, after the United States left unclear its interest in defending the Korean Peninsula.

Since Israel and the Arab states have different concerns, American commitments to them could take different forms. Arab governments might want to avoid political accusations that they were tying themselves too tightly into the American orbit, and might opt for something short of a full defense treaty — perhaps a declared security guarantee and an announcement that Washington had extended its nuclear umbrella, which already

covers allies like NATO members and Japan, to them. Israelis might worry that any American accord with Iran would limit their options to deal alone with conventional provocations from Iran or its proxies, like Hezbollah. But provisions could be written into that treaty assuring Israel that its hands would not be tied if Israel felt it didn't need America's help. With that assurance, an airtight series of American commitments to defend Israel if necessary would be hard for Israel to reject — especially if the United States also extended such commitments to Israel's Arab neighbors.

The obvious criticism of such a network of agreements is that it would risk drawing Americans into another Middle East war. But the intent, and the likeliest outcome, would be the opposite: an insurance policy against war's breaking out, much as NATO's commitment to mutual defense helped deter any Soviet move against Western Europe at the height of the Cold War.

In fact, if America's allies accepted the benefits of the guarantees, the Obama administration's greatest challenge would most likely lie in persuading the Iranians that the treaties did not threaten their security or the integrity of the agreement under contemplation. Iran would need written assurances that the security network would become operational only if Iran itself violated the accord; that the network of treaties would be solely for defensive purposes; and that it would not apply if one protected country started hostilities on its own and without provocation. In addition to easing Iranian suspicions, that last proviso would allow the United States, Israel and the Arab states flexibility to defend their interests independently.

Of course, the Iranians might strongly object to such

arrangements, and see them as limiting their influence in the region and even constituting an alliance against Iran. To allay those fears, the administration should propose a framework for frequent discussions about any alleged violations of the accord, as well as the possibilities of cooperating on other matters in which their interests might coincide (for example, on Afghanistan, Syria and prevention of terrorism). The Americans would want to create such a process in any event, if an accord with Iran were ever reached.

Even as government officials in Israel and Saudi Arabia express doubt that Iran can be trusted, it is not too early to think about steps that will have to be taken if the talks with Iran succeed. No deal could completely allay suspicions about Iran's sincerity overnight, and that could undercut the accord's chances of making the region feel more secure. America must begin preparing for that now, by offering its allies a more certain security net.

Steven L. Spiegel is a professor of political science and the director of the Center for Middle East Development at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a scholar at the Israel Policy Forum.

[Article 6.](#)

Foreign Policy

The Iran deal is a good first step. Let's

see what happens next

Matthew Kroenig

November 24, 2013 -- Early Sunday morning in Geneva, the P5+1 and Iran announced that they had reached an interim deal on Iran's nuclear program. Many are heralding the agreement as an historic breakthrough, and the deal does indeed buy us time, but it is much too early to declare victory. Indeed, the Iranian nuclear crisis might still very well end in President Obama making a fateful choice between Iran with the bomb or bombing Iran.

The interim pact is a step in the right direction. It puts strict ceilings on all aspects of Iran's program, including: centrifuge production, number and types of operating centrifuges, stockpiles of low- and medium-enriched uranium, numbers of enrichment facilities, and the start-up of the Arak reactor. In addition, these measures are to be verified by more intrusive inspections. In exchange, the United States offered relatively modest sanctions relief to the tune of roughly \$7 billion. The deal will leave the most important aspects of the sanctions regime in place and, if Tehran honors its end of the bargain, prevent Iran from inching ever closer to a nuclear weapons breakout capability while negotiations continue. But we are not out of the woods yet.

The interim deal is, as Secretary of State John Kerry has said, only a "first step." It is to remain in place for six months until a "comprehensive" accord can be reached. In other words, now comes the hard part.

There remains a chasm between the two sides on fundamental issues, including Iran's erroneous claim to a "right to enrich," Tehran's unwillingness to come clean on its past nuclear weaponization activities, whether Iran will be allowed to continue to enrich at the deeply buried Fordow facility (or to enrich at all), the final status of the Arak reactor, and many other matters.

For the next six months, therefore, we will replay the tape we have been watching since President Rouhani assumed power in August. The Iranians and the P5+1 will attempt to negotiate an accord while a worldwide chorus chimes in on the contours of an acceptable deal and otherwise seeks to influence the outcome.

So, where will we be six months from now?

There are three possible outcomes. First, the two sides might successfully negotiate a comprehensive deal that succeeds in dismantling the Iranian nuclear threat. This would be the best possible outcome, but, given the outstanding differences mentioned above, it is also the least likely.

The second possibility is that the six-month interim deal expires without an accord and the two sides agree to extend the terms of the interim deal. Over time, therefore, there is the danger that the interim deal becomes permanent. (Also in this category would be the possibility that we reach a weak "comprehensive" pact that does not go much beyond the interim arrangement). This outcome should be avoided. As long as such an arrangement is strictly enforced, it would at least prevent Iran from making the final dash to a nuclear weapon, but it would leave far too much

of Iran's nuclear infrastructure in place for comfort, amount to a de facto recognition of Iran's right to enrich, and set a dangerous precedent for nonproliferation policy. Moreover, the tough sanctions regime now in place cannot hold forever, and over time the pressure on Iran to uphold its end of the bargain will dissipate.

Finally, and at least as likely as the others, is the possibility that the interim deal begins to unravel after six months, or perhaps even before, and Iran resumes its steady march toward nuclear weapons. In this event, Congress must pass the tough sanctions bill it is currently marking up and the international community must prepare to take military action.

Because nothing in this recent flurry of diplomatic activity changes the basic fact that, as President Obama has stated many times, a nuclear-armed Iran is "unacceptable" and the United States must do "everything that's required to prevent it."

Matthew Kroenig is associate professor of government at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security at The Atlantic Council. He is the author of the forthcoming book, A Time to Attack: The Looming Threat of Iran's Nuclear Program.

Article 7.

Politico

Iran's Mullahs Have a Vote

Robert D. Blackwill

November 24, 2013 -- Too many American chaise-lounge bombardiers, condemning the substance of the interim nuclear agreement reached with Iran this weekend in Geneva, ignore or dismiss the consequences of the likely price of diplomatic failure—a U.S. attack on Iran. Discussing that daunting prospect as if it were a video game, they use terms like “surgical strike” and “limited military engagement” to suggest that such a U.S.-Iran confrontation would be successful, decisive and over in a hurry. The day after, in their estimation, would look pretty much like the day before. Such strident advocacy ignores one crucial variable—the reaction to an American attack by the Iranian leadership. The mullahs have the decisive vote on what would happen next.

If the United States attacked, Iran would face a decisive and far-reaching choice: Respond in a fashion that sought to avoid escalation of the conflict and maximize its perception in world opinion as the innocent and aggrieved victim of American anti-Islamic aggression, or react in ways that make a prolonged conflict more likely. What enthusiast for bombing Iran can confidently foretell the answer to that question?

It's easier said than done. In February 2012, Gen. Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff described Iran as a “rational actor,” and as super-strategist Thomas Schelling has emphasized, “You can sit in your armchair and try

to predict how people will behave by asking how you would behave if you had your wits around you.”

But, more or less using that technique, the United States has continually been surprised by the actions of other governments and leaders, including Adolf Hitler in the 1930s, Japan at Pearl Harbor, Fidel Castro during the Bay of Pigs, the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall, the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the fall of the shah in Iran, Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Taliban revival in Afghanistan, Bashar Assad’s ability to remain in power in Syria, and so on. Thus, beware of those who forecast with supreme overconfidence a minimalist reaction by Tehran.

To list possible Iranian reactions—especially in a prolonged clash—is not to predict them but to stress that the United States should be ready to deal with all of them. Nor is this menu meant to support a U.S. policy of containment regarding Iranian nuclear weapons, which would be deeply destabilizing both in the region and globally. As Louis Pasteur observed, “Fortune favors the prepared mind.” An Iranian escalatory ladder might look something like this:

- Begin immediately to accelerate, rebuild, disperse and hide its nuclear facilities with even more determination to acquire nuclear weapons as a deterrent to future U.S. attacks, leaving the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and expelling International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors.
- Persuade or coerce selected Muslim countries to positively restructure their relations with Iran, taking advantage of anti-American public opinion in the context of the Arab Awakening.

- Encourage domestic unrest in Arab nations friendly to the United States.
- Prompt Hezbollah and Hamas missile barrages against Israel.
- Attack Israel with ballistic missiles, attempting to draw Israel into war.
- Publicly advocate and secretly promote violence against American facilities and citizens throughout the Muslim world.
- Increase material support for Taliban operations against U.S. forces in Afghanistan and radical Shia terrorism against U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel in Iraq.
- Attack U.S. military and oil installations in the Persian Gulf.
- Attack U.S. warships and mine the Gulf, attempt to close the Straits of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of the world's oil trade passes.
- Instigate terrorist actions against U.S. government and commercial targets around the globe, including the U.S. homeland.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, speaking on state TV on March 20, 2012, said all of Iran's conventional firepower was ready to respond to any attack. "But against an attack by enemies—to defend ourselves either against the U.S. or Zionist regime—we will attack them on the same level that they attack us." Given Washington's weak predictive record and the fog of war in conditions of incomplete information, it seems wise for contingency purposes to take Khamenei at his word and then some.

Any responsible American president must do everything prudently possible to avoid such a U.S.-Iran military confrontation, including by rejecting negotiating prescriptions in which Tehran would have to agree to freeze or roll back its domestic enrichment while Washington would offer no relief on sanctions. That would most probably be a recipe for war. This weekend's result in Geneva should be measured not only against an ideal outcome but also against the alternative of U.S. military conflict with Iran. In that context, this is a deal worth supporting.

Winston Churchill said it best, "The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events...incompetent or arrogant commanders, untrustworthy allies, hostile neutrals, malignant fortune, ugly surprise, awful miscalculations."

Robert Blackwill is Henry A. Kissinger senior fellow for U.S. foreign policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. He was deputy national security adviser for strategic planning and ambassador to India in the George W. Bush administration.

[Article 8.](#)

Bloomberg

In Iran, Obama Achieves 50 Percent of His Goals

Jeffrey Goldberg

Nov 24, 2013 -- U.S. President Barack Obama has had two overarching goals in the Iran crisis. The first was to stop the Iranian regime from gaining possession of a nuclear weapon. The second was to prevent Israel from attacking Iran's nuclear facilities.

This weekend, the president achieved one of these goals. He boxed-in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu so comprehensively that it's unimaginable Israel will strike Iran in the foreseeable future. Netanyahu had his best chance to attack in 2010 and 2011, and he missed it. He came close but was swayed by Obama's demand that he keep his planes parked. It would be a foolhardy act -- one that could turn Israel into a true pariah state, and bring about the collapse of sanctions and possible war in the Middle East -- if Israel were to attack Iran now, in the middle of negotiations.

On the other matter -- actually preventing Iran from getting hold of a nuclear weapon -- Obama and his Great Power partners have at least slowed the regime's march across the nuclear threshold. If they're not careful they could wind up legitimizing Iran's nuclear ambitions (never forget that Iran's leaders are lying when they insist they've built their nuclear program exclusively for peaceful purposes). But Obama and his partners seem to have bought a bit of time here.

To echo my Bloomberg View colleague Al Hunt, the temporary deal struck in Geneva seems, in many ways, like the least-worst option at the moment. There are four ways to neutralize the

Iranian regime's nuclear program. The first is the military option, executed either by Israel or by the U.S. (The Arab states, which want a military solution very much, have never shown the desire to actually carry it out.) A bombing campaign is a bad idea: It could very well destroy many of Iran's nuclear facilities, but it also could kill innocent people and legitimize the program. The sanctions regime would collapse following a strike, which still would not wipe out Iran's nuclear knowledge base and could rally the country around the cause of full nuclearization.

Crushing sanctions, the second option, have been effective at forcing Iran to the negotiating table, but years of sanctions have not placed the Iranian regime's survival in jeopardy. The regime is willing to let its citizens absorb a great deal of pain on its behalf, and when those citizens get ornery, it hasn't been shy about killing them. It seems unlikely that sanctions, which are already hard enough to enforce, will bring about Iran's total nuclear capitulation.

The third path is a campaign for a complete regime change, but the American experience in Iraq has removed this option from the table. The U.S. has neither the stomach nor the competence to bring about the collapse of the regime.

The fourth path is diplomacy, and this interim deal may be the best the U.S. was going to get. The deal has many dubious features. It comes perilously close to recognizing Iran's so-called right-to-enrich. It makes it even less probable that the West will confront Iran for its nefarious behavior in Syria. It frees up billions of dollars for the regime to use in exchange for nuclear concessions that are reversible. It does not require a

single centrifuge to be dismantled. Iran could still make a rush for nuclear breakout in eight weeks.

I'm fairly confident, however, that Iran won't make such a precipitous move at the moment. I'm also reasonably confident that the Obama administration is still capable of walking away from the main show -- the upcoming, actually difficult, final negotiations -- if Iran refuses to dismantle those parts of its nuclear infrastructure that could be used to manufacture a bomb.

And the U.S. might just have to walk away because there isn't much proof that Hassan Rouhani, the putatively reformist new Iranian president, or the foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, are authorized by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, to actually agree to a meaningful deconstruction of the nuclear program. Strategic pauses are fine, but actual dismantling? It seems hard to believe, for any number of reasons, the simplest one being that it is in the best long-term interest of the regime to have the means to quickly build a nuclear weapon. It's certainly not in the interest of the regime to agree to be disarmed by the U.S., its arch-enemy and the country still often referred to as the Great Satan.

So everything that has happened over these past months may not amount to anything at all. Contra Netanyahu, who unrealistically seeks only total Iranian capitulation, it isn't stupid for Obama to find out for sure what, if anything, the Iranians are willing to give up for good.