



## Ten questions for the negotiators with Iran

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In its newest push for dialogue with Iran, the West still faces a wily opponent, adept at the game of futile negotiations.

In view of the possibility of renewed talks between Iran and the “Vienna Group” (the US, France, Russia, and the IAEA), one cannot but wonder whether this will be “the real thing” or another Iranian time-buying ploy.

Although at first Iran delayed the opening of talks, it later recommended to the Vienna Group not to delay the talks. Contrary to the talks that started with the P5+1 in Geneva on October 1, 2009 that were supposed to deal with the whole spectrum of issues between Iran and the rest of the world, the Vienna Group dealt only with the “swap” – the proposed deal whereby in exchange for 3.5% Iranian enriched uranium Iran would receive 20% enriched uranium in the form of nuclear fuel rods for its Tehran Research Reactor (TRR). Iran first agreed to this deal, then opposed, then agreed to a more favorable (to Iran) deal brokered by Brazil and Turkey, but not accepted by the US.

Things have changed since October 2009. Iran continued enriching uranium and started enriching its 3.5% to 20%, a step very near the target of having military-grade enriched uranium.

The Security Council imposed stronger sanctions that coupled with US, EU, and other countries' sanctions are beginning to hurt Iran, which could be the reason for Iran's agreement to renewing talks.

However, while the original deal was to have deprived Iran of the quantity of 3.5% uranium that could be further enriched to produce its first nuclear bomb, a similar deal, concluded this week, would do no such thing. Iran has since accumulated more than the amount needed for two nuclear bombs, and removing the original amount would not negate this possibility.

Although Iran has agreed to sit down and talk, this should not be taken as a sign that the situation is changing. Iran is a wily opponent, adept at the game of futile negotiations. At the Vienna Group, the US would also be at some disadvantage in comparison with the original negotiations in Geneva, especially if Brazil and Turkey are included in the talks.

A New York Times editorial (August 6), which quoted President Obama stressing “the need to outline a clear ‘pathway’ of steps that Iran could take to convince the world that it is not pursuing a nuclear weapons program,” questioned why Obama would not provide specifics on what the “pathway” might entail. In fact, however, the most that can be done is to assure that all weapons related activities are verifiably stopped.

THREE MAJOR TOPICS that cover ten questions should guide the US team when sitting down to serious talks with the Iranians: The framework of the talks 1. Will the talks be limited to the subject of fuel for the TRR? Limiting the talks to the swap will do nothing to diminish the suspicions that Iran is proceeding on a weapons development route. Its timetable for the potential to have a first weapon would not have changed, and at most, its timetable for the acquisition of a nuclear arsenal will be set back by a year. Abandoning the effort for a serious discussion and a resolution of the nuclear issue would only give Iran more time to achieve its aims. In addition to the discussion on a swap deal, the talks must also deal with the issue of Iran's adherence to the Security Council resolutions.

The terms of a swap deal 2. In the case of a swap would the enrichment to 20% and the subsequent TRR fuel production be carried out on the Iranian supplied enriched uranium? This would not be the case according to the Brazil-Turkey brokered deal, and the uranium would be returned to the Iranians if the supply of the fuel did not take place within the unreasonable timeframe of one year.

3. Will Iran stop its 20% enrichment? Proceeding with its 20% enrichment program will indicate that Iran's purpose is to get nearer the military grade uranium and not the TRR fuel production, since they do not have the technology to produce the nuclear fuel rods from the enriched uranium and since they will have a guaranteed supply of nuclear fuel for the TRR.

4. Will Iran transfer its stocks of 20% enriched uranium as part of the agreement? This is almost a condition sine qua non for any deal. Iranian insistence on leaving the 20% enriched uranium in its hands would surely be indicative of its malintent.

5. Will Iran pay for the TRR fuel it receives? Although of secondary importance, this would be indicative of the Iranian willingness for a fair deal.

Iran's adherence to the demands of the IAEA and the Security Council 6. Will Iran fully carry out the "sustained suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and heavy water-related projects"? This is the crux of the matter. These are demanded by the Security Council and the reasons for the imposition of sanctions on Iran. These were the basis for the October 2009 Geneva meeting.

These were abandoned in favor of trying to first achieve the swap deal, and should have been continued at the time. Precious time was lost when this did not materialize.

The following three questions probe this issue, since suspension of the enrichment activities alone is not enough to halt the complete range of activities that could resume in force, as occurred on previous occasions when Iran wanted it: 7. Will Iran reinstate its obligations under the Additional Protocol (AP) safeguards? 8. Will Iran stop installing additional centrifuges at all sites? 9. Will Iran stop developing new types of centrifuges? And the final issue: 10. Will any agreement with Iran entail the annulment of the sanctions? This will probably be an Iranian demand as a precondition for any agreement.

As a first stage no new sanctions will be imposed on Iran. The sanctions should then be suspended only when Iran's adherence has been verified by the IAEA, according to AP procedures.

In any case, the sanctions should be suspended, subject to approval by the Security Council, for a given period, e.g., for three months. Any subsequent suspension should be approved by the Security Council. The suspension will automatically cease unless specifically agreed to.

The negotiators with Iran would do well not to concede these important points. This is perhaps the one last chance to stop the Iranian game of playing for time. The swap has lost its allure, and nothing will turn the situation back to what it was in October 2009. Dealing with the swap issue alone will surely get the Iranians closer to their target: the potential for having a nuclear weapons capability within an increasingly shorter timeframe.

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