The Nuclear Agreement with Iran:

Reflections and Forecasts

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Foreword

Avner Golov and Owen Alterman

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear agreement signed in Vienna between Iran and the P5+1 (the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) on July 14, 2015 has been heralded as an historic event by both its advocates and detractors.

This collection brings together thoughts from the researchers at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) on different aspects of the agreement and its strategic consequences for Israel, regional security in the Middle East and global order. Here, researchers give focused answers to questions put to them, providing an initial but also broad and multidimensional analysis of the nuclear agreement.

This compilation is meant to serve as a foundation for a serious and comprehensive discussion of the implications of the Vienna agreement, toward a formulation of an Israeli strategy that aims to improve the strategic reality by respond to the threats and take advantage of the opportunities embodied in the agreement.

Part I: On the Nuclear Agreement

Have the negotiations achieved their objective?

Ephraim Asculai, Emily B. Landau, and Shimon Stein

We have closely followed and written about these negotiations since 2003, and they always had a consistent goal: to keep Iran a non-nuclear weapons state, as part of an indefinite commitment to the NPT. As lead US negotiator Wendy Sherman said last year, the only measure of success is that Iran never obtains a nuclear weapon. It is questionable whether that longstanding goal has been achieved. Our sense is that a string of P5+1 concessions over the past year on the critical issues of the sunset clause, verification, the possible military dimensions (PMD) issue, and Iran's continued work on its nuclear infrastructure, coupled with Iran's proven non-compliance with its NPT obligations, make it uncertain that the deal will keep a nuclear weapon out of Iran's hands. When one adds to the mix the $100 billion (or more) Iran will receive at the outset, Iran's enhanced regional position, and Iranian attitudes that reject the notion of a changed relationship with the US, the basis for concern only grows. Not only might this agreement not stop Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, it is also almost assured to boost the Iranian regime's standing across the region.

What positive elements characterize the agreement with Iran?

Yair Evron

Israeli concerns regarding Iran have long focused on the possibility that Iran might eventually progress in the production of nuclear weapons, which would constitute an "existential threat" or at least introduce a major change, to Israel's detriment, in the strategic environment. The agreement has removed that possibility for at least fifteen years. It comprises a series of measures specifying the limitations on the enrichment of uranium and on the plutonium path, thus preventing Iran from acquiring the fissile material

needed for the production of a bomb. In addition, Israel was concerned that a nuclear Iran might be able to impose its political will on Middle East countries by "nuclear coercion." Whether this was a realistic concern is a different matter, but the agreement has removed this concern as well. The upshot is that the agreement serves Israel's strategic interests well.

The agreement might have different and possibly contradictory effects on Iranian foreign policy, as well as on its regional behavior. Israel should try to develop strategies – in coordination with the US administration – of how to counter Iranian adversarial moves, and search for possibilities toward an improved Iranian policy toward Israel.

What are the inherent threats in the Iran nuclear agreement?

Gideon Sa'ar

The agreement reached in Vienna does great harm to the national security of Israel. This agreement causes strategic damage with severe consequences. First among these is the legitimacy conferred on Iran as a recognized nuclear threshold state. This international legitimacy whitewashes the Iranian nuclear capabilities constructed over many years while trampling international resolutions regarding Iran. Second, the agreement almost inevitably puts the Middle East on a trajectory toward a nuclear arms race and an increase in nuclear proliferation. The international community will find it difficult to confront other nations in the region striving to develop their own nuclear programs in order to narrow the gap with Iran and create a balance of deterrence against it.

This and more: The lifting of the economic sanctions that is part of the agreement will result in a massive infusion of cash into Iran, allowing the country to entrench its regional status and conventional military power. Iran's subversive activity in the region – including support for the murderous Assad regime and for the funding and arming of terrorist organizations – will expand. Renewing the sanctions against Iran should it violate the terms of the agreement will be difficult, if not impossible.

During the talks, the conduct of the leading nations, steered by the United States, strove toward an agreement at all costs and was based on the erroneous assumption that an agreement was the only effective way to stop the Iranian nuclear program. The international community's concession of its ability to impose its will on Iran through sanctions and a credible military threat will have serious repercussions far beyond the concessions the world powers made in the technical aspect of the talks with Iran. Given these erroneous assumptions, what are the chances that there will be strict enforcement of the agreement in face of the Iranian violations that are sure to come? What chances do the world powers have to withstand demands made by other nations in the region?

In the Middle East ─ and not only there ─ the agreement is viewed, with great justification, as strengthening Iran's regional position at the expense of the interests of friends of the United States and the West in the Middle East.

The bottom line is this: the limitations imposed on Iran are temporary. Even if Iran chooses not to violate the agreement (which is doubtful), it will have immediate breakout ability after the period of the agreement ends. The damage already caused to the existing regional order and world order is dramatic.

To what extent does the agreement block Iran's way to the bomb?

Ephraim Asculai

Assuming that the International Atomic Energy Agency is aware of all Iranian nuclear facilities – i.e., there are no undeclared facilities, there is no banned activity, and all facilities are under strict supervision as stipulated by the agreement – one may say that if fulfilled, the terms of the agreement will delay Iran's breakout time to a considerable degree.

The agreement deals with four technical topics, in ascending order of importance: the reactor in Arak, the uranium enrichment structure, the possible military dimensions (PMD) of the nation's nuclear program, and the inspection regime. The Arak reactor issue has been resolved by its future conversion to a system that will not produce significant

amounts of military grade plutonium. The question of enriching uranium in significant quantities has been postponed for a decade, and the amounts of raw materials for advanced enrichment have been severely curtailed. Satisfactory answers to the PMD issue will jumpstart the elimination of the sanctions. As for the inspections, this topic is not adequately covered because the agreement does not ensure access to all locations at all times and thus makes the search for hidden or undeclared facilities impossible. Furthermore, the agreement does not allow access to scientists or documents; it does not explicitly allow environmental sampling; and it requires proof for accusations requiring inspections of undeclared facilities ahead of time, including military installations where there is suspicion of activity linked to nuclear arms. Gaining permission for such inspections is a drawn-out process, which could provide Iran with enough time to hide activities and materials at these sites. These drawbacks are liable to turn into the agreement's Achilles' heel and renew Iran's potential for manufacturing nuclear bombs at short notice. But the real question is: can we trust Iran to meet its main commitment under the agreement, namely never to develop nuclear arms?

What are the chances that sanctions could be snapped back?

Owen Alterman

The plausibility of snapping back sanctions depends on intentions. If even one member of the five permanent UN Security Council members is determined to snap back sanctions, the agreement supplies the tools. The snapback mechanism suffers from poor drafting that could allow for mischief, but on the whole, its organizing concept is better than expected. Not only do the Russians and Chinese not have veto power, but the United States or Britain or France can snap back sanctions by acting alone. The agreement also allows for a quick snapback process – again, if the complaining party is determined to see it through.

Paragraph 36 of the agreement, which sets out how snapback works, might turn out to be the most important provision in the entire deal; it addresses how the agreement might come to an end. In practice, this is not an agreement for ten years or fifteen years or until

the end of days. That depends on intentions. Any party, be it Iran or a future US president, can essentially leave the agreement on short notice. Once Iran has received its $100 billion and locked in business deals, this exit could be worth pursuing. It could also be of interest for a Republican presidential hopeful. On January 21, 2017, the day after taking office, a new US president could assert that Iran has breached the agreement and, on February 25, 2017, pull the United States out of it. In retrospect, the agitation over Sen. Tom Cotton's 47-signatory letter was unnecessary. The president does not need to renounce the agreement; he/she can simply use the agreement's own terms as a basis for leaving. This may well get attention in the 2016 campaign.

Part II: The Agreement's Wider Implications on the Security Challenge Posed by Iran

Should Israel preserve the military option given the agreement?

Ephraim Kam

Until recently, the military option was a central component of Israel's preparedness and strategy to foil the Iranian nuclear program. The signing of the agreement changes the situation and, to a significant degree, detracts from the Israeli threat to use the military option when necessary. For its part, the US administration has taken the military option off the table, thereby also damaging Israel's military option. As long as the Iranians do not violate the agreement in a fundamental manner, an Israeli recourse to the military option will be seen as an attempt to destroy an international agreement to which the world powers are signatories. For these reasons, the credibility of the Israeli military option has also been damaged. Nonetheless, Israel must preserve the military option for the future, for a time when, or if, Iran violates the agreement, and especially if it becomes clear that it is working to attain nuclear weapons. If this happens, the US military option will be placed on the table again and provide backing for an Israeli move of this sort.

How important is Iran's missile program the day after the deal?

Avner Golov

A state intent upon attaining operational military nuclear capabilities must develop both the bomb and a platform for dispatching the bomb to its destination before it can be considered a credible operational nuclear threat. If, despite the agreement, Iran manages to develop the bomb, an improved missile program will be the last hurdle it must cross on its way to becoming a nuclear power. Nonetheless, the agreement signed between the world powers and Iran does not deal with the threat embodied in the Iranian missile program. Very early on in the talks, Tehran made it clear that it would not discuss its

missile program, claiming that the focus of the negotiations was limited to the nuclear program alone. Nonetheless, the nuclear agreement does say that the sanctions linked to Iran's missile program will be lifted in eight years, despite the US declarations that the non-nuclear related sanctions will stay in place, including those relating to the missile program. Iran continued to develop its missile program throughout the negotiations and can be expected to do so in the future.

As a complementary component to the nuclear deal with Iran, the US administration must act assertively to stop Iran's missile program before Iran has the capability of arming ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads and threatening targets all over the Middle East and beyond. This is critical in reducing the threat inherent in the new reality in which Iran is recognized as a legitimate nuclear threshold state. Such a step could strengthen deterrence vis-à-vis Iran and prevent an Iranian decision to cross the nuclear threshold without having the ability to translate its nuclear technological know-how into operational military capabilities. As part of its assessment of the agreement, Congress must demand that the administration present an action plan that provides a response to this threat as part of its regional policy for the day after the agreement.

How does the agreement affect the Iranian cyber threat?

Gabi Siboni and Daniel Cohen

Cyberattacks against the Iranian nuclear program and the widespread Iranian protests generated through the internet during the 2009 election period turned cyberspace into a very important arena from the perspective of the Iranian regime and spurred it to establish a significant cyber presence.

The implementation of the agreement with the world powers will affect the Iranian cyber arena, both internally and externally. Internally, Iran's opening to the world might make it difficult to rein in subversive elements opposed to the regime. We may therefore expect increased supervision of Iran's domestic cyber arena as well as concomitant developments in technologies to monitor and control it.

The resources now freed up from physical defenses (a kinetic attack seems a very remote possibility at this point) and the money flowing into the Iranian economy could be channeled to a greater extent than in the past toward cyber defense. As a result, Israel might find it difficult to gather intelligence and carry out cyberattacks against Iran. Given this, the relevant Israeli institutions (the IDF, Mossad) will have to invest time, resources, and creativity in the development of tools to confront Iran's improved defenses.

The Iranian regime can also be expected to funnel more resources into further development of advanced attack capabilities. The same goes for increased scope of development of shared capabilities and cooperation with Hizbollah and Hamas in cyberspace. In such a scenario, Israel is liable to find itself under more sophisticated and powerful cyberattacks than before, against state systems, critical infrastructures and targets in the civilian sector. Israel will have to upgrade its defensive responses in all of these sectors, including intelligence gathering, foiling capabilities and mechanisms for recovery from successful attacks.

How does the agreement impact on the possibility of greater Iranian involvement in terror?

Yoram Schweitzer and Benedetta Berti

It is important to be clear about what issues were part of the negotiations with Iran. The country's role in Syria and its support for different terrorist organizations in the Middle East were not at any point discussed in the negotiations, nor was it part of the agreement signed in Vienna. Similarly, progress on the nuclear file was not made conditional upon Iran changing its regional policy. Therefore, those who are expecting to see a significant change in Iranian policies are likely to be disappointed. The fear is that despite optimistic public statements by Western states on hoped-for change in Iranian policy, the nuclear deal gives Iran de facto recognition of its role as a threshold nuclear power and of its hegemony in the Gulf. With that, there is in practice implicit Western acquiescence to Iran's support ─ through training, arming and financing ─ of Hizbollah, Hamas, and other groups. Supporters of the nuclear deal counter-argue that the agreement on nuclear

proliferation should be looked at separately and that it does not change the international condemnation for Iranian support of terrorism or for its role in Syria. In fact, following an agreement, Iran can be expected to see substantial financial gains as a result of the unfreezing of its assets and bank accounts, removal of restrictions on commerce, and the opening of its market to the outside world. This will allow Iran to increase its support for terror organizations and provide them with money, equipment, and greater and more sophisticated weapons than in the past. In addition, a nuclear agreement that fully ignores Iran's terror policy is an alarming sign of the status of deterrence capabilities of Western states, first and foremost the US, set against the Iranian regime's policy of terror proliferation in a way that threatens the stability of the Middle East and Israel's borders.

Part III: An International View of the Agreement

Now that the agreement is signed, what should Israel's policy be toward Washington?

Oded Eran

Israel has legitimate concerns and President Obama himself has recognized this, even while asserting that a better alternative to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was not proposed. Israel and its political leaders have the duty to express their concerns and point to the weaknesses and lapses of both the negotiations process with Iran and the result – the JCPOA. But here issues of substance and form assume critical importance. Prime Minster Netanyahu is already perceived as taking sides in the highly-charged domestic partisan contest – his speech to Congress last March was boycotted by dozens of legislators – and further intervention in the Congressional process relating to the JCPOA could inflict long term damage on the hitherto bipartisan support for Israel in US public opinion. There is already some erosion in that support among America's young, liberal generation, including the Jewish component.

It is imperative that Israel realize that though the agreement has become a reality, the debate in the US and especially in Congress has just begun, particularly as the legislation calls for the administration to submit periodical reports both on Iran's implementation of the JCPOA and on other issues, such as Iran's support for terror. Through sophisticated diplomacy, Israel will be able to influence the discussions, those in Congress and those between the US and Iran, staying away from the political domestic rift that will inevitably widen in the US presidential race.

President Obama's public statements after the announcement of the JCPOA indicate willingness to enter into a serious discussion with the Israeli government over the implications of the agreement for Israel's security. This dialogue is vital for Israel, and should not be confined to the military aspects of Iran's nuclear program and Israel's qualitative military edge. Given the radicalization and disintegration of the region and the

role of Iran in these processes, Israel must enhance its strategic dialogue with the US and expand that dialogue beyond the nuclear-related issues.

What lies in store for the administration regarding the debate in Congress?

Shlomo Brom

From the day the agreement was signed (and then delivered to Congress), the two houses of Congress have 60 days to examine the deal and choose one of three responses: not to vote on the agreement, vote in favor of the agreement, or vote against it. Since Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech to Congress against the deal, the issue has become highly partisan. It is therefore clear that the Republicans, who have a majority in both houses, will vote against the deal, while the Democrats will by and large vote in favor of it, though a few Democrats with close relations with the Jewish establishment will also vote against it. If Congress decides to vote on the deal, we can expect a majority to oppose it. President Obama will cast his veto, and then the real test will be if the opponents of the agreement can muster a two thirds majority to override the presidential veto.

The battle in Congress will thus likely focus on the Democratic vote, which is why even before he agreement was signed the White House launched an intensive dialogue with key members of the Democratic minority in both houses aimed at maintaining its base of support within its own party.

The questions in Congress center mainly on questions of the agreement's widespread ramifications rather than on any of its specific details. The key issue is how the administration intends to deal with the possibility that Iran will use the money that will be freed up – at least $100 billion – to expand its subversive and destabilizing activities in the region, especially its support for terrorist organizations. Another related issue concerns the security guarantees the administration intends to provide to its traditional Middle East allies, i.e., Israel and the Gulf states. The main issues touching on the agreement itself are: how does the administration intend to ensure that the inspection system and the mechanism for restoring the sanctions in case of Iranian violations of the

agreement will in fact achieve their aim, namely warn of Iranian violations and allow for an effective response to them?

What is Russia's Iran strategy on the day after the deal?

Zvi Magen

Russia has benefited from its participation in the negotiations with Iran, as the talks have positioned it as an influential international player and moved it somewhat closer to the West. Russia now hopes to reap the benefits in several realms:

Economically: Alongside its concerns about Iran's return to the oil market, Russia is interested in exploiting different economic opportunities, in terms of arms deals, nuclear reactors, information technology, and various types of machinery and equipment. Russia also expects Iran to become part of the Shanghai Forum and the Eurasian economic treaty now being established under Russia's leadership.

Regionally: Russia views Iran as a key regional player in the Middle East and, like the West, is interested in incorporating Iran into the fight against radical Islam. Russia hopes that Iran will make a significant contribution to the war against ISIS and thus help support Assad and stop ISIS from crossing the border into Russia.

Strategically: Russia hopes to shape the future regional and international order in cooperation with Iran, now a strengthened player, in Middle East conflicts, which will provide Russia with further channels of influence. In this new situation, Russia may want to exploit these channels of influence to promote understandings with the West: despite the tensions in other arenas, it is in Russia's best interests to reach understandings on Ukraine to lift the economic sanctions, which have created significant hardships. It may be that as part of the arrangement on the Iranian issue, there is a comprehensive deal in the making that would include a settlement on both Syria and Ukraine. In other words, Russia would help resolve the Syrian issue in exchange for understandings with the West on Ukraine.

In tandem with its activity in the regional complex, Russia is taking care to maintain positive relations with Israel, which Russia recognizes as an important regional player. Bilaterally, the relations continue to develop. For its part, Israel sees Russia as an influential international player, and eyes its own not inconsiderable nexus of interests related to Russia and regional activity. It seems that in a reality of rapid changes in regional power relations, Israeli-Russian cooperation is becoming a fundamental factor operating in both nations' favor.

How are EU-Iran relations likely to develop?

Shimon Stein

For the European Union, the agreement represents an historic achievement and proof of the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy, the guiding principle of EU policy. The working assumption reflected by statements of European policymakers is that the deal (whose implementation will be closely followed by Germany, France, and the United Kingdom) creates the potential for change at the bilateral level for the EU and, just as importantly, for the region itself. Given the success of the negotiations format (three EU members plus three others), the German foreign minister called for an attempt to act in a similar manner to settle the Libyan and Syrian crises.

Even before the ink on the agreement had dried, industrialists and economists from several nations hurried to point to the significant potential that the lifting of the sanctions will bring to many EU members that had extensive trade and energy relations with Iran before the sanctions were imposed. So, for example, Germany hopes to double exports to Iran within a few years from the €5 billion level of 2005. There is no doubt that the crisis with Russia will raise the temptation to view Iran as an alternative to Russia in terms of natural gas and oil. Along with the opening of the Iranian market, and based on the desire to exploit the potential for change in Iran, EU members will act both bilaterally and through the EU to open a political, cultural, and social dialogue. Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who hurried to attribute the achievement of the agreement to the EU, noted that given the new reality it would be

appropriate to embark on a regional initiative to start a dialogue between Iran and the Gulf states – an ambitious agenda indeed whose realization will depend, first and foremost, on the implementation of the deal. While both sides will make an effort to overcome difficulties when it comes to energy and economics, seeing the mutual profits involved, when it comes to the political and strategic realms, the EU – whose influence on the region is limited – will encounter difficulties in fully normalizing relations without undermining its links with the Sunni states in the Gulf with which it (especially France and the UK) has close relations, unless there is a profound change in Iran's regional policy.

What are the ramifications of the agreement for the global nonproliferation regime?

Emily B. Landau

One of the aspects of the recently secured nuclear deal with Iran that receives almost no attention is the implication for the NPT regime. In Article xi of the Preamble it says that all provisions of the JCPOA should not be considered as setting precedents for any other state or regarding rights and obligations under the NPT. It is not hard to understand why the P5+1 wanted to include that in the document, but is it a realistic expectation? Any non-nuclear NPT state in good standing that in recent years has been held to the gold standard as far as its civilian nuclear program – because the Iranian precedent highlighted the danger of enabling a state to work on the fuel cycle – will surely be uneasy with the agreement. Why is Iran, a blatant violator of the NPT, granted special rights with regard to its nuclear infrastructure, that other states are denied? This deal sets a precedent, and a very negative one at that, whether the international negotiators like it or not. Not to mention that the deal basically legitimizes Iran's status as a dangerous nuclear threshold state, which was certainly not the aim of the NPT.

Part IV: Regional Ramifications of the Agreement

How is the nuclear agreement likely to affect the Arab Spring?

Mark A. Heller

The most dramatic consequence of the Arab Spring (or the Arab uprisings) has been the cracking of the security state in heterogeneous societies and the explosion of long-repressed ethnic and sectarian hatreds. At first glance, none of this is directly related to the nuclear deal negotiated between Iran and the major global actors led by the United States. However, it is indeed related, because the major fault line in the identity conflicts wracking the region lies between an Iranian-led Shiite camp and disparate Sunni populations in the region, for whom Saudi Arabia is the closest entity to a standard-bearer. While some of the smaller Gulf sheikhdoms may see the nuclear deal as a reason to bandwagon with Iran, Saudi Arabia will probably intensify its efforts to balance Iran in every arena of confrontation, efforts that began long before the nuclear deal was agreed and appear to be even more urgent in its aftermath. This is already evident in the form of diversified international contacts with Russia and China, a renewed dialogue with Hamas, and military escalation in Yemen, resulting in the recapture of Aden. If the Yemen campaign (about which the United States was not informed in advance) proceeds successfully, Saudi Arabia can be expected to step up its support for Sunnis of all ideological colorations in Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria, and perhaps even intervene directly in the latter two states, before Iran can reap the material benefits of its deal with the United States. Thus does the nuclear deal threaten to fan the flames of the regional firestorm produced by the Arab Spring.

What are the implications of the agreement on Iran's influence in the Levant?

Udi Dekel and Omer Einav

Although all eyes are on the details of the nuclear agreement, the key issue is in fact the implications of the deal on Iran's regional and international standing, its ambition for regional hegemony, and the expansion of its influence in the Middle East. It is likely that Iran made the strategic decision to remain a nuclear threshold state long ago and that it is in no hurry to break out to the bomb, despite its capabilities (though retaining the breakout option). The whole purpose of negotiating with the West was to earn extra dividends on a decision the nation had already made and attain international recognition and legitimacy as a threshold state. Iran can now have its cake and eat it too. As it emerges from its isolation and gains economic opportunities it never had in the past, Iran – formerly a pariah state – becomes a member of the community of nations and a key player in resolving regional problems, a stable and responsible entity that can help confront the challenges of regional instability and the spread of ISIS. Even before the agreement was signed, Iran's low key presence in Sana'a, Baghdad, Beirut, and Damascus was quite evident; now this trend can be expected to grow as the Iranians will be able to increase their investment in strengthening their proxies throughout the Middle East. The most interesting arena from Israeli perspective is Syria, where Iran must make a strategic decision: preserve Assad's regime no matter what the cost, support other options such as a coalition made up of rebel groups and the old regime, or declare a successor who will control a smaller region. In this context, there is recent talk of strengthening the major geographic and demographic spine in Syria – from Damascus in the south through the Lebanese border to Latakia in the northwest – as a kind of "smaller Syria" or "greater Lebanon" under increasing Iranian influence. Much depends on Iran's strategic decisions and the directions in which it decides to steer the system.

The bottom line is this: the nuclear agreement strengthened Iran's regional position and granted it legitimacy, resources, means and the desire to expand and enhance its influence on the region.

How is the deal with Iran viewed in social media in the Arab world?

Orit Perlov

Many discourses on social media suggest that the United States has started to see Iran as a strategic ally in confronting and resolving Middle East challenges, particularly the dissolution of nation states, the weakened governance in many Sunni states, and the growth of radical Islam. In their opinion, the United States views Iran as an ally that can help degrade and pull back the Islamic state and serve as a stabilizing force in a chaotic environment. By contrast, most of the Arab public sees Iran as Iran's essential part in the sectarian conflicts and civil wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. On social media, many stress the danger inherent in US policy and claim that If Iran is tasked with fighting ISIS, expect ISIS to entrench, grow and expand which will cause a bloody sectarian war between Sunnis and Shiites throughout the Middle East. Some say that many will openly join ISIS if they see Iranian tanks in Syria.

On social media discourses, the nuclear agreement is also seen as an absolute Iranian victory. Iran got all it wanted, whereas the United States is seen as having reached the finish line on crutches. Despite the picture of victory parties from Tehran, there were hardly any celebrations outside the capital, and the pictures of the celebrations were nothing like those seen when Iranian President Rouhani won the election. Social media discourse indicates that many Iranians, even if optimistic and happy with the agreement, are skeptical, and would prefer to see the implementation of the agreement. Most of the signs visible during the victory celebrations called for upholding human rights and the release of opposition leaders Karoubi and Mousavi, who have been under house arrest since the Green Revolution in 2009. One of the Lebanese bloggers described the nature of the negotiations as such: “Obama and Rouhani are like two young lovers whose stern parents don't want them to be together. A Shakespearian tragedy” – will this one end differently?

Will Saudi Arabia realize its nuclear threat?

Yoel Guzansky

The agreement with Iran is not expected to prompt the launch of a military nuclear program in Saudi Arabia in the immediate future. However, it has already made the kingdom adopt a strategy whereby it seeks to leave all nuclear options open, a form of nuclear hedging. Saudi Arabia announced its (civilian) nuclear intentions almost a decade ago, and it has since been examining the use of nuclear technology for a number of purposes. The concern is that any nuclear program will serve as the foundation for the development of a military program, in response to changes liable to occur in the political circumstances in the kingdom and elsewhere, a worsening of the threat against it, and the erosion – as Saudi Arabia sees it – of the US commitment to defend it. At the core of the Saudi policy lies the assertion that the world must recognize its right to enrich uranium on its soil, insofar as Tehran was just awarded this right. That is, if Iran is now an acknowledged nuclear threshold state, Saudi Arabia could strive to achieve parity.

From Riyadh's perspective, the agreement with Iran imposes on Iran a decade – so the kingdom hopes – of nuclear restraint. This timeframe allows the kingdom to examine different nuclear options under the Non Proliferation Treaty. Even if the Saudis' march to nuclear capabilities is unsuccessful, their joining the regional nuclear arms race is liable to touch off processes with negative ramifications for the region's stability. The source of the Saudi understanding of the threat lies in Iran's ambition for regional hegemony. This was not changed by the agreement; in fact, the agreement may enhance this ambition. Saudi Arabia will therefore find it difficult to stand idly by, partly out of considerations of prestige, and given its influence in the Muslim world and its economic resources, it will seek a response, if only partial, to the Iranian threat.

Events in the Arabian Peninsula are not covered well by Israel, which quite naturally devotes most of its capabilities to the Iranian threat. Israel should therefore improve its intelligence gathering and assessment capabilities with regard to other arenas, especially the Arabian Peninsula, in order to identify attempts on the part of other nations to create

a nuclear balance with Iran. The trends described above more than justify a new Israeli assessment of the situation.

Are Iranian-Turkish relations expected to change in the aftermath of the agreement?

Gallia Lindenstrauss

The nuclear agreement between Iran and the world powers is not expected to generate a significant change in Turkish-Iranian relations, but tension could ensue if the agreement motivates Iran to take a more assertive stance in the region. For years, Turkey and Iran have maintained relations that are simultaneously competitive and cooperative. The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement welcoming the signing of the agreement. Generally speaking Turkey has for years consistently claimed that the diplomatic path is the proper route for dealing with Iran. In relating to the agreement, the Turkish foreign minister also noted the need for Iran to play a more constructive role in resolving regional conflicts, thereby hinting at the criticism Turkey has of Iran's conduct in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Before the final agreement between Iran and the world powers was reached (though it was already clear in which direction the wind was blowing), Saudi Arabia tried to strengthen its ties with Turkey and drive a wedge between Ankara and Tehran. Still, Iran's importance to Turkey as a major provider of energy should be remembered. The Turkish Finance Minister noted that the agreement with Iran is "great news" for the Turkish economy. On the other hand, in the past, Iran has used Turkey to circumvent the devastating impact of the sanctions (in deals involving oil and natural gas for gold) and therefore, from Iran's point of view, the lifting of the sanctions will help reduce its dependence on Turkey. The complex relations between Iran and Turkey have already meant difficulties in reaching shared understandings between Israel and Turkey on the nature of the threat emanating from Iran and the best way to deal with it. The nuclear agreement is not expected to change this in any fundamental way.

What effect will the agreement have on the Iraqi reality?

Carmit Valensi

Amid the mounds of criticism and suspicion on the part of Middle East nations regarding the regional implications of the agreement with Iran, Iraq's favorable response to the signing is particularly noteworthy. In the view of official Iraq, the agreement symbolizes a thaw in relations between the United States and Iran, whose practical manifestation is close military and security cooperation between the nations in their war against ISIS and perhaps also in their attempt to stabilize this failing state (on the part of Iran, there is already extensive military and intelligence activity in Iraq, including the financing and training of Iraqi Shiite militias, in part by the Revolutionary Guards).

The ramifications of the agreement with Iran raise a question that extends beyond the Iraqi context: will the agreement with Iran rein in its regional policy and even stop its support for terror, or will its emerging image as a constructive player and the expected improvement in its economy be factors that allow Iran to expand its policy of subversion in the region even more forcefully than is currently the case? Despite the tendency to see the nuclear agreement as something that shakes the very foundations of the regional order, from a regional perspective the ramifications of the agreement are actually quite limited and are not expected to lead to real change in the ongoing situation of crisis in the Middle East.

Nonetheless, it is safe to assume that in the Iraqi arena, where Iran is involved and its influence on the Shiite government is already dominant (since the fall of Saddam Hussein and especially since the US withdrawal), Iran can be expected to step up its involvement and efforts to preserve Iraqi unity under Shiite control. Beyond the political ramifications, the agreement is liable to affect Iraq economically, as the lifting of the sanctions on Iran will flood the market with oil and therefore reduce Iraqi oil exports, which could lead to serious damage to the country's already floundering economy.

Conclusion: How should we assess the reality created by the agreement?

Amos Yadlin

The agreement between the world powers and Iran is a very problematic document – a bad agreement for Israel. However it contains some short term achievements: the deal rolls back Iran's nuclear program so that it is a year away from the bomb, reduces the program's scope, and imposes an inspection regime that is much more intrusive than the current one, including entrance into military facilities. For at least the next 10 years, the threat of nuclear weapons in Iranian hands has been reduced. Iran has committed itself not to develop nuclear arms even 15 years from now, although given Iran's past conduct the extent of trust in this commitment is fairly limited.

In the mid and long term ranges, the picture is much bleaker. The agreement provides Iran with legitimacy to be a nuclear threshold state. This status will be entrenched even further following the removal of the temporary limitations on the scope of the program and once Iran is permitted to operate an unlimited number of advanced centrifuges, resume unlimited 20 percent uranium enrichment, and engage in the reprocessing of plutonium. As acknowledged by President Obama, this situation will leave Iran with near zero breakout time to a bomb. The standards and norms approved for Iran, in both the short and the long terms, will make it difficult to contend with the nuclear aspirations of other countries in the region, which – in light of the agreement – may also demand the right to develop comparable threshold capabilities.

In its non-nuclear aspects, the agreement is extremely problematic and constitutes a significant challenge to Israel's national security. The lifting of sanctions will facilitate the immediate influx of more than $100 billion to Iran, and many more hundreds of billions of dollars over the coming decade. Even if most of these funds are invested in the Iranian economy, enough will be left to strengthen Iran's conventional military forces; increase its ballistic missiles orbit; develop the Iranian defense industry; and support the preservation of Bashar al-Assad's murderous regime in Syria. These will all help Iran advance its

hegemonic aspirations and subversive activities in the region. Just a fraction of this sum would be enough to triple the annual budget of terrorist organizations such as Hizbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

So what is the right policy now? First, Israel must reach understandings with the United States on a shared way to confront the risks inherent in the agreement. Such agreements and understandings must include the following: intelligence cooperation to compensate for lapses in the realm of inspections; a clear definition of what constitutes significant violation of the agreement; response mechanisms in the event of violation; and a security aid package to improve Israel's ability both to contend with the threats that will stem from the strengthening of Iran and its terrorist proxies, and to thwart an Iranian breakout toward a bomb. These understandings should be anchored in a "side agreement" between Israel and the United States.

Second, now that an agreement that worsens Israel's strategic situation has been signed, Israel's political and military force must be constructed in a manner that provides an effective response to all aspects of this negative change. Despite the long term negative aspects of the agreement, the next five years provide Israel with a window of opportunity to prepare the IDF and the State of Israel for the expected challenges in the medium and long terms: to build the force required for better defense against surface-to-surface missiles and rockets by developing anti-missile and anti-rocket defense systems, to enhance the strategic military option against Iran, and to reach understandings with allies on a response to the threats stemming from the Vienna agreement.

Third, it is necessary to prepare for the possibility of future nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Once the Vienna agreement grants legitimacy to the construction of an extensive nuclear infrastructure in Iran allowing rapid breakout to a nuclear bomb, there is real concern that this threshold will become the new regional standard. Israel must therefore follow such problematic developments and act in concert with the international community to preempt them.

Finally, and despite the severity with which it views the agreement, Israel must refrain from intervening in the American political system. The US Congress is not the appropriate theater for Israel to intervene in a partisan struggle. Israel, however, is obligated to convey

its assessments to both supporters and opponents of the agreement within the United States, while ensuring that the political discussion occurs without Israeli intervention.