

President Obama's Questionable Framework Agreement for an Iranian Nuclear Deal



Smiling US negotiating team, Undersecretary of State Sherman, Secretary of State Kerry, Energy Secretary Moniz and unidentified colleague. Source: Reuters/Brendan Smialowski/Pool

See these smiling faces, Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman, her boss Secretary of State John Kerry, Energy secretary and former MIT Physicist Ernest Moniz and an unidentified colleague? Their smiling because they may have just laid on Americans, Israelis and the World an April fool's Joke of no laughing matter – an alleged political framework for a nuclear deal with Iran. A deal yet to be finalized with the Islamic Republic of Iran that their [‘Frank Underwood wannabe boss’](#), President Obama announced in the Rose Garden yesterday. Obama [said](#):

“Today, after many months of tough, principled diplomacy, we have achieved the framework for that deal. And it is a good deal,” Obama said.

Obama delivered his statement from the Rose Garden where he described it as an “historic” agreement. He said he is “convinced” that, if the framework leads to a final agreement, “it will make our country, our allies, and our world safer.”

- “This has been a long time coming. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been advancing its nuclear program for decades,” Obama said.
- He said Iran has “eliminated its stockpile of dangerous nuclear material.”
- Obama said the deal was the “best option” to address concerns about Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon because the country had agreed to a “robust and intrusive inspections and transparency regime” that ensured it would not be able to produce a weapon covertly.
- According to the president, the agreement outlined in the framework “shuts down Iran’s path to a bomb using enriched uranium” because Iran will not be permitted to enrich uranium for ten years.
- Obama noted the deal would include sanctions relief for Iran. However, he specified some US sanctions would not be lifted and said “sanctions can be snapped back into place” if Iran violates any agreement.
- Obama, who described the framework simply as a “good deal,” alluded to critics who have been skeptical of the negotiations when he said they “succeeded exactly as intended.”
- “Iran has met all of its obligations,” Obama said.
- Obama said the framework sets the stage for an agreement that “would cut off every pathway Iran could take” to a nuclear weapon. He also stressed any final agreement would include strict measures to verify Iran is complying.
- “Iran has also agreed to the most robust and intrusive inspections and transparency regime,” he said. “This deal was not based on trust. It’s based on unprecedented verification.”

[Watch](#) this C-SPAN Video announcement of the Framework Agreement with Iran at the White House Rose Garden:



Israeli PM Netanyahu 4-2-15

Source: *Times of Israel*

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in a telephone conversation with President Obama told him “A deal based on this framework would threaten the survival of Israel.” *USA Today* noted Netanyahu’s objections:

- In [a string of tweets](#), Netanyahu spokesman Regev outlined a series of objections to the Iran plan.
- “This deal would legitimize Iran’s nuclear program, bolster Iran’s economy & increase Iran’s aggression & terror,” Regev tweeted.
- “Such a deal would not block Iran’s path to the bomb,” he added. “It would pave it.”
- Netanyahu also said that “the alternative is standing firm and increasing the pressure on Iran until a better deal is achieved,” Regev wrote.

The White House readout of the call with Netanyahu President said that Obama “underscored that progress on the nuclear issue in no way diminishes our concerns with respect to Iran’s sponsorship of terrorism and threats towards Israel and emphasized that the United States remains steadfast in our commitment to the security of Israel. Further, “he has directed his national security team to increase consultations with the new Israeli government about how we can further strengthen our long-term security cooperation with Israel and remain vigilant in countering Iran’s threats.”



Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL)

It was left to the architect of much of the Iran nuclear

sanctions legislations of the past decade, Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL) to blast the framework deal announced by President Obama. As cited in a *Politico* [article](#):

The Illinois Republican trashed a deal struck by global powers with Tehran, concluding in a phone interview “that Neville Chamberlain got a lot of more out of Hitler than Wendy Sherman got out of Iran,” a reference to a top State Department negotiator on the deal.

But Kirk wasn’t done, forecasting that lifting any more sanctions on Iran “dooms the Middle East to yet another war,” one that Israel will have to clean up, perhaps in a nuclear fashion.

“We should be a reviewing presence to see how this unfolds,” Kirk said of Congress’ role, adding: “Which we all know is going to end with a mushroom cloud somewhere near Tehran.”

Kirk’s office called to clarify that Kirk was referring to a nuclear test in Iran.

Asked if he could find anything to like in the deal, Kirk responded: “No.”

He said now Iran could speed its production of nuclear weapons, which he fears could end up in the hands of Iranian-backed rebels throughout the Middle East, including Yemen.

“There’s nothing for Iranians to do but go at breakneck speed to a nuclear weapon,” Kirk said. “We’re moving straight to forcing Israel to clean up this mess ... when the West does nothing; Israel over and over has done something.”

The deal, he added, “commits Israel on a path to war with Iran. And we shouldn’t force our best ally in the region

to clean up the mess.”

Not exactly the balm of Gilead to Netanyahu who has had a fractious contentious relationship with the Administration on this existential issue confronting the Jewish nation. Netanyahu is huddling with his Security Cabinet discussing the fine points of what some have called a ‘vapor agreement’ as even the State Department negotiating team of experts believe it will require word smithing over every term in every sentence of the definitive agreement which could mean that the June 30th deadline may not see the end of negotiations. That in fact, negotiations could go on with Iran past the end of the President term in January 2017. In which case it would left to his successor to conclude or walk away from the framework deal ending Obama’s legacy endeavoring to bring the Islamic republic into the regional and world umbrella of responsible governments. A faint hope that the successor might be more responsible than aging Supreme Ruler Ayatollah Khamenei, aged 75 and in alleged poor health who declared “death to America” in the midst of final framework negotiations. Then there is the senior Iranian IRGC official who this week said that destruction of Israel was “non-negotiable.” This all sounds like the old English adage “if wishes were horses then beggars could ride”.

You might ask yourself how Obama got to this position. As much as he never stops blaming the Bush Administration for everything that has gone wrong in the Middle East and especially with Iran’s nukes, the origins of the game of diplomacy with coercive sanctions began in the latter half of the Bush Administration from 2005 to 2008 when the original E+3 negotiations with the Islamic Republic started during the Iraq War. The architects of the prototype strategy were Secretary of State Condi Rice and Phillip Zelikow, former 9/11 Commission Director and Counselor at State. That is revealed in a fascinating *Commentary* article, [“How America Bamboozled Itself about Iran”](#).

Criticism can be found in the current edition of a new international business Journal, *Quartz* co-authored by Mark Dubowitz, Executive Director and Annie Fixler of the Center for Sanctions and Illicit Finance of the Washington, DC-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). FDD's experts led by Dubowitz have provided important testimony on Capitol over the debates on the virtues of Iran nuclear sanctions and achievement of possible nuclear breakout under various scenarios. *The Quartz* article title by Dubowitz and Fixler echoes Israeli PM Netanyahu's response about the framework on his call with President Obama, ["Obama's nuclear deal with Iran puts the world's safety at risk."](#)

The key concerns rose by Dubowitz, Fixler and others are:

- The Administration abandoned original commitments to ["dismantle"](#) ["a lot"](#) or ["significant"](#) portions of Iran's nuclear infrastructure. As evidenced by comments in Lausanne by Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif, the infrastructure to create fissile material remains intact which is unlikely to keep Iran away from achieving nuclear breakout in a year or less, notwithstanding the alleged sunset provisions.
- The deal will sunset in 10 to 15 years, which presumably would enable a subsequent Iranian regime to vastly expand centrifuges to achieve nuclear breakout in a year or less.
- Iran will no longer have to ship its current stockpile of enriched uranium outside of Iran for reduction, but will convert it to a gaseous form easily reversible technically in a few weeks.
- Iran will retain over 6000 centrifuges for uranium enrichment, that the authors point out is more than six times the level originally sought by the Administration and just enough for producing fissile material for bomb making.
- Fordow, the underground centrifuge hall near Qom would

have less than 1,000 centrifuges allegedly for isotope research but easily converting to nuclear fuel enrichment and it is 'impervious to possible Israeli attack'.

- There is only nodding mention of Iran's non-compliance with repeated requests by the IAEA for information on previous military developments such as nuclear explosive triggers, miniaturization of warheads and the ICBM program that may already have been accomplished in cooperation with North Korea.
- Proposed redesign of the Arak heavy water reactor may still leave the project capable of producing plutonium;
- The President's comment that "if Iran cheats the world will know about it" seems implausible given that the IAEA will not have inspection access to known facilities on an unscheduled basis, nor because of Iran's non compliance on previous military developments would it have information on illicit or clandestine locations, such as those alleged elsewhere in Iran, Syria and North Korea.
- As the authors write, the questions the President's boast that if the terms of the technical agreement are violated by Iran, that tough sanctions "can be snapped back" is implausible given current experiences with Russia and China. They warn, "Once strictures are loosened, it will be difficult to put the sanctions back together again. Western economic leverage will be sharply reduced, leaving military strikes as America's only real option to stop an Iranian bomb."

The authors conclude:

Once upon a time, the administration insisted that no deal was better than a bad deal. The parameters of the nuclear deal that have emerged look like we are headed toward a seriously flawed one. This will leave Iran as a threshold nuclear weapons state increasingly immune to economic

pressure, further supercharge Iranian aggression in the region, fan the flames of sectarian warfare, and possibly even encourage Iran's Sunni adversaries to develop their own nuke capabilities. Indeed, "game-changing, legacy-setting" it will be.

There is a model for what the US and its benighted P5+1 partners have signed off on in the framework agreement with failed North Korean nuclear agreements. Yesterday's *Wall Street Journal* column by Dan Henninger, "[Why the Iran Deal is Irrelevant](#)" cited chapter and verse of the history over the period from 1990 to 2013 of wholesale cheating found by the IAEA, clandestine development and test of nuclear weapons and ICBMs by the hermit kingdom of the People's Republic of North Korea. Lest we forget Ms. Sherman was involved in the failed Clinton era negotiations of a similar framework agreement involving exchange of light water reactors for heavy water ones and interim fuel oil. That collapsed with tests of ICBMs in 1998. Then we had similar exasperating experiences during the Bush era culminating in the October 2006 test of a nuclear device. This despite the repeated use of six party discussions with North Korea involving China Russia, South Korea, Japan and the US. Repeated UN Security Council resolutions passed following each violation by North Korea imposing sanctions. Those coercive measures did not deter the hermit Kingdom from its strategic objectives of a missile deliverable nuclear capability threatening Japan, South Korea and the US.

Henninger's money quote from his column "Nuclear talks with North Korea prove that Iran's nuclear program will go on-deal or no deal."

The cheating by Iran has already started. Foreign Minister Zarif criticized the State Department Fact Sheet on the framework agreement as "lies". Stay tuned for developments.

