



Israel Debates No. 15

24 February 2014

The Geneva Interim Agreement in the Inner-Israeli Dispute

The Geneva agreement between the P5+1 powers and Iran over Iran's nuclear program was negotiated in November last year with implementation beginning on January 20. The agreement freezes the Iranian nuclear program at its current level, bans the enrichment of uranium above 5%, and enforces strict monitoring of Iranian nuclear facilities. In return, the P5+1 powers promised to relax sanctions against the regime, which have brought about a severe economic crisis in Iran. Hence the interim agreement can be considered as a first step on a long road of further negotiations about the Iranian nuclear program.

While the USA and Europe welcomed the agreement, Israel was outraged and rejected it. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the agreement a "historical mistake," and members of his Likud party even compared it to the 1938 Munich agreement. Israel's representatives and its public fear that Iran is making superficial concessions merely in order to deceive the West, while secretly still seeking nuclear weapons. Despite the agreement and the concomitant ban of nuclear enrichment, Israeli nuclear weapons experts believe that Iran will be able to develop nuclear warheads within four to six months. For Netanyahu and most Israelis the danger still exists that Iran will use its nuclear capabilities against Israel, and follow through with its anti-Israeli rhetoric so as to wipe out the Jewish state. Naftali Bennett, Minister of Economics and Trade, has therefore stressed that Israel does not feel itself bound by the agreement and will exercise its right of self-defense when it feels threatened by the Iranian nuclear program. Hence the option of an Israeli military strike against the Iranian nuclear facilities is still very much on the table. Nevertheless, now that the agreement has been signed, military cooperation between the USA and Israel has become less likely. The regional implications of the agreement are also causing concern to Israel. If the international community lets Iran become a nuclear threshold state, then other

countries, such as Saudi Arabia, will aspire to the same status. Thus the Geneva agreement could launch a nuclear arms race in the region.

We would now like to give two experts the opportunity to present their points of view. **Efraim Sneh** is a politician and a physician who was a Labor Party Knesset member from 1992 until 2008. **Helit Barel** was chairperson of Israel's Peace and Security Council. Her main fields are arms control and nuclear deterrence.

The western politicians who finally agreed on initial resolutions with Iran after lengthy and tough negotiations celebrated this as a major breakthrough: A first step on the road to a more peaceful region – and even to a more peaceful world.

In his article, **Efraim Sneh** assesses the results of the Geneva negotiations more critically. From his point of view, the negotiators were dazzled and therefore failed to grasp the true character of the theocratic state. Despite its apparent concessions to the western world, Iran is a hotbed of violence, discrimination, and oppression. Since the revolution, true power has been in the hands of non-elected theocrats, whose ideology is diametrically opposed to the free and enlightened western society. Even an apparently freely elected and moderate president like Rohani has to submit to the religious leaders.

Despite all its concessions to the outside world, Iran's rulers still follow their path of increasing their influence in the region – be it by means of terror, (nuclear) arms, or money. Sneh emphasizes that money in particular plays a crucial role on the way to becoming a great power. This aspect has been greatly impacted by the sanctions of the last few years. Only if the international community relaxes these sanctions, so that the country's vast oil reserves can be exported again, will billions of dollars flow into the state budget. Iran could freely use this money for rearming without international control. Even if some of the nuclear material is destroyed, the structures behind it will remain. Sneh assumes that for the time being the USA wants to keep Iran nuclear free until the next elections, with long-term development fading into the background. Additionally, western companies would profit from oil deals that will become possible.

Efraim Sneh sees the Geneva concessions as a mere "pawn" sacrifice of the Iranian government in order to improve the country's ailing finances state and in the long term to expand the Islamic state's power in the region and on the world stage - with any and all means available.

In contrast, **Helit Barel** advocates for a more pragmatic view by Israel of the Geneva agreement. It would be premature at this stage to call the agreement a fatal mistake. One would have to wait until the process of the pending negotiations develops in order to make such an assessment. The agreement does not meet the desired level of Iranian concessions as no full disclosure of Iran's nuclear program has been achieved, and it will not be completely eliminated. Hence although the nuclear threat is not stopped, Iran

is given the chance to regain legitimacy in the international arena. However, Iran will receive only minor concessions with regard to the sanctions. After all, the interim agreement would extend the period during which Iran could develop a nuclear bomb, and hence provides more time for negotiations.

From Barel's point of view, the outcomes of the agreement have to be judged in comparison to the other possible options. To hope that further sanctions would lead to the collapse of the regime is a dangerous game with time. An Israeli joint military strike together with the USA would be difficult to coordinate, and an Israeli unilateral attempt would not be a real alternative.

Instead of panicking and fueling the public discourse, Israel should adopt a pragmatic position and ask what else could be done to decelerate the Iranian nuclear program. This would also mean that it will cooperate constructively in upcoming rounds of negotiations. At the same time, the Western powers have to take Israel's security concerns into account, as well as including it to a greater extent in the ongoing negotiations. This also means that possible regional impacts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, have to be considered. Expectations regarding the interim agreement should not be set too high – after all, it is only the first step on a long road of negotiations.

Dr. Werner Puschra,
Director, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel

Herzliya, February, 2014

The Geneva Interim Agreement and its implications for Israel

By Helit Barel

The interim deal signed in Geneva in November 2013 between the P5+1 and Iran launched an active public debate in Israel that has, at times, bordered on hysteria. Prime Minister Netanyahu called the interim agreement a "historical mistake" and others compared it to the Munich Agreement of 1938, with Likud MK Tzahi Hanegbi declaring it a "moral defeat". The debate in Israel rapidly moved from a discussion about the best way to halt or delay the Iranian nuclear weapon program, and instead developed into a broad and vague discussion of regional and ideological rivalries which was accompanied by domino theories regarding the further proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and the global decline of Western power. In this context it is both necessary and useful to refocus the discussion on the relevant and vital Israeli security interest at stake here, i.e. the prevention of Iranian nuclear weapon capabilities. This is not to say that other elements of Iranian policy in general and those pertaining to Israel in particular are not threatening or problematic. However, Iran's support of terrorist organizations, its constant meddling in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its detestable ideological rhetoric, simply do not pose a threat to the existence of the State of Israel. For this reason, the nuclear issue stands alone as the one that Israel must

focus on first and foremost, bearing in mind that panic is not a foreign policy.

The Interim Agreement

The condemnation of the Geneva Agreement as a dramatic mistake and capitulation by the P5+1 simply does not hold water when considering the one parameter Israel should care about most, which is the question of how close Iran is to possessing military nuclear capabilities and how long the breakout time would be.

To recap, under the Interim Agreement Iran has committed to suspend advancement of its centrifuge program (this includes a halt to enrichment using advanced centrifuges and the installation of new ones), eliminate its stock of 20% enriched uranium by converting half into oxide and diluting the remaining half to enrichment levels of no more than 5%, stop construction of the heavy-water facility in Arak, and allow better access for IAEA inspections. A first visit to Arak has already been made.¹ The bottom line here is that progress of the Iranian nuclear program is halted for six months, and the breakout time has somewhat lengthened.

The interim agreement is criticized in Israel for its limited achievements: it does not fully reflect the demands of four UN Security Council resolutions, and in particular does not relate to Resolution 1737 which calls for suspension of "all

¹ According to the text reported by CNN at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/24/world/meast/iran-deal-text/>

enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development; and work on all heavy-water related projects, including the construction of a research reactor moderated by heavy water." Instead, while freezing the Iranian program at its current stage, the agreement does not force Iran into dismantling the infrastructure of its program, thus allowing it to resume activities in six months if a comprehensive deal is not reached. The interim agreement can also be read as de facto acceptance of an Iranian enrichment capability, which can even be maintained under a comprehensive agreement. In addition, the agreement fails to deal with IAEA demands that Iran make full disclosure regarding various military aspects of its nuclear program, and does not provide the ability to search for clandestine nuclear or nuclear-related activities.

Essentially, opponents of the interim agreement claim that it does not eliminate the Iranian nuclear threat, but rather leaves Iran in the position of a nuclear threshold state able to break out towards military nuclear capacity within months, while paving the road for Iran to be relieved of sanctions and regain legitimacy in the international community.

As the concerns regarding the interim agreement indicate clearly, this certainly is not a perfect agreement. However, it is important to remember that this is but an interim agreement, meant to provide an opportunity for more protracted and in-depth negotiations with the hope of producing a longer term comprehensive agreement which addresses the main

concerns regarding the Iranian nuclear program. It is true that Iran gave up much less than desirable, but it also gained marginal relief only from sanctions, estimated at no more than \$7-9 billion.² This is the nature of an interim agreement as it is no more than a first step. Major General (Ret.). Amos Yadlin, former head of Intelligence in the IDF: "Iran was not made a threshold state by this interim agreement; rather it was one before the agreement was signed." Therefore, the pivotal question is this: given the unfortunate reality of Iran's current nuclear capabilities, what else could be done to prolong the breakout time, or better yet, to eliminate the Iranian program altogether?

As with any policy options, the interim agreement should be judged in relation to other available options, mainly the continuation of the status quo (with some possible variation) and the possibility of a military strike, either by Israel alone, or in cooperation with the United States. Prime Minister Netanyahu apparently favors the first option, of maintaining sanctions and possibly marginally enhancing them. He seems to expect that the Iranian leadership would soon "cave in" and agree to a complete eradication of its nuclear program. However, in contrast with the Geneva deal, this option does not provide an immediate stop and to some extent a rollback of the Iranian nuclear program. Rather, this view exemplifies an all-or-

² Reportedly, Israeli officials claim that the sanction-relief value is significantly higher and stand around 20\$ billion. See: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.562824>

nothing approach, risking continued Iranian movement towards military nuclear capabilities with every passing day. The problem with this approach is obvious: Iran could just as well achieve military nuclear capability, despite the sanctions and before they bring about the desired collapse. In contrast to Netanyahu's perspective, the P5+1 see sanctions as means to force Iran into meaningful negotiations, and in that sense they have worked well. Still, it is important to note that this policy option was certainly useful as long as Iran was unwilling to enter into negotiations, and it might be called for again should the Geneva deal or negotiations for a comprehensive agreement fail. Indeed, part of what is appealing about the Geneva Agreement is that the sanctions remain largely intact and continue to exert pressure on Iran to implement agreed-upon measures and to continue negotiations towards a comprehensive agreement.

The other alternative to the agreement signed in Geneva is of course military action by Israel and/or the United States. Both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama have stated repeatedly that the military option is "on the table," thereby indicating their commitment to preventing an Iranian military nuclear capability by use of force, if necessary. However, both US and Israeli officials have admitted that there is a difference of opinion as to what indicators might warrant military action, especially pertaining to the timeframe of such action. Clearly, the interim agreement has created a climate which would make

a unilateral Israeli strike very difficult to execute. Yet Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated that Israel is not bound by the agreement, thereby keeping alive the threat of an Israeli strike. This Israeli stance is a logical one considering the stakes for Israel, and in fact it is also useful in a way because it keeps the option of military action both viable and credible, in this way potentially assisting the P5+1 in the negotiating process by maintaining leverage vis-à-vis Iran whose track record is anything but reassuring. But the decisive questions for Israeli policy-makers should be how useful an unilateral Israeli strike against Iran would be in delaying the Iranian nuclear program, and how the cost-benefit analysis of such a strike compares to the achieved delay of the Geneva Agreement.

In summary, when situated in the context of available courses of action regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, rather than some ideal but unrealistic approach, the interim agreement seems like an acceptable policy option. It puts some much needed time back on the clock while still keeping other policy options in play. Of course, continuation on this track relies heavily on what happens next with negotiations for a comprehensive agreement.

Negotiating a comprehensive agreement?

Whether or not a comprehensive agreement addresses Israeli security concerns depends of course completely on the content of the agreement. The next phase of negotiations is pivotal, and

Israel must work closely with the P5+1 nations to ensure that core issues are dealt with in a more comprehensive way, and that the negotiation process is reasonable and advantageous. It is imperative that during the process all of the interim agreement's obligations are fulfilled and that time frames are strictly observed, while both sanctions and military action are maintained as viable alternatives to the negotiation process. On a less technical level, it is crucial that the P5+1 maintain their resolve to bring an end to Iran's military nuclear program, and be willing to walk away from the negotiation process. This last point is particularly important, as pressure to prove that the negotiation path has succeeded should not overshadow what truly is at stake. It should not lead the P5+1 to adopting an incremental agreement framework, as this would only serve to weaken the leverage they hold.

On substantive matters negotiators must pursue several pivotal issues which include:

- The scope of the centrifuge program – what number and type of centrifuges will Iran be allowed to maintain?
- The stockpile of enriched uranium, will it be removed from the country?
- What is the future of the Fordow facility?
- Will the Arak facility be converted to a light-water reactor or shut down?
- Will Iran sign the additional protocol? Will it accept more

intrusive inspection mechanisms and an ability to search and detect clandestine sites?

- Will Iran be required to fully cooperate with IAEA demands and address open issues regarding military aspects of its program?
- Will Iran maintain an enrichment capability? If yes, at what level?

Ultimately, by addressing these concerns, Israel (much like the US and EU nations) would aim to roll back the Iranian program as far as possible and lengthen the potential breakout time. The key questions are how much of this is feasible, and what the differences are between what Israel would find acceptable and what the P5+1 would. For example, if a breakout time of approximately six months can be achieved, would this satisfy the P5+1? It is highly unlikely to satisfy Israeli decision makers, who want to see the breakout time measured in years rather than months. Another question is what will happen if negotiations fail? President Obama reportedly gave 50/50 odds for the success or failure of the process, and Secretary of State Kerry professed he has serious doubts about the feasibility of reaching a comprehensive agreement. In the event of failure, will the P5+1 immediately reinstate the sanctions? Will they make the next step and ask the UN Security Council to authorize the use of force?

Needless to say it is of the utmost importance that Israeli concerns are heard, taken into account, and addressed. Israel should certainly take a

pragmatic course of action and work strongly to influence the negotiating positions of the P5+1, leaving behind the irrelevant rhetoric about Munich etc. Israel must also abandon the attitude that negotiating with Iran (whether in the P5+1 format or in a bilateral US-Iran format) is in and of itself a crisis, and refocus instead on the nuclear issue alone. Fear of engagement with Iran should not lead Israel to close the door on an opportunity for gaining time on the nuclear issue. For their part the US and E3 must work closely with Israel in much greater transparency, keep it engaged in the process, identify and try to narrow the gaps in positions, and make sure that Israel is not put in the position of "back up against the wall" always keeping in mind that as high as the stakes are for the international community, they are even higher for Israel.

Regional implications of the P5+1 negotiations with Iran

Some of the more alarmed voices in Israel have declared that the interim agreement with Iran constitutes the opening shot for an inevitable nuclear arms race in the Middle East, as other nations in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey will not stand idly by while Iran is allowed to maintain the status of a nuclear threshold state. The concerns of various Middle Eastern states with regard to Iran's nuclear capabilities should not be underestimated, and the past decade has seen a highly increased interest in nuclear power by several countries in the Middle East. Having said this, it is important to note that this is one of the

issues that can actually be effectively addressed, as it was in the past when nuclear power first emerged. From Atoms for Peace through the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and with the help of regional security arrangements such as NATO and bilateral ones, or the treaty between the U.S. and Japan, new and inventive frameworks were put in place. In the 1960s, President Kennedy apparently predicted that 20 states would become nuclear powers within a few decades. He was wrong, but only because of these efforts that sought to deal with the security interests of nonnuclear states through creative cooperative frameworks that gave incentives to relevant nations to turn away from the nuclear option.

This is why the spread of nuclear weapon capabilities throughout the Middle East is far from being an inevitable process. Still, preventing such a scenario requires the involvement of European nations as well as the US in providing security assurances under a relevant framework to moderate Middle Eastern countries, thus eliminating their need for individual nuclear capacity. One of the more interesting aspects of the interim agreement with Iran is the reportedly tight cooperation that has emerged between Israel and Saudi Arabia, exposing the extent to which their interests on this matter overlap. Such compatibility of interests creates an important opportunity for the creation of a new regional framework on the issue of arms control. Many obstacles would stand in the way of such an endeavor, including the Arab abandonment of the

concept of a Nuclear-Free Zone, the challenges some Arab governments have to face because of the Arab Spring, and the state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Still, great as the task might be, it is not as great as the risk posed by a multi-nuclear Middle East, a genuinely nightmare scenario. This task can only be fulfilled if the EU and US act together to create and promote such an option outside of the NPT, by offering extensive security guarantees and the necessary sticks and carrots in an effort targeted at the moderate Middle Eastern states.

The Iranian issue and the Israeli Palestinian conflict

There is quite a bit of confusion in the Israeli debate about the possible relationship between the Palestinian issue and the Iranian one. On the one hand, Likud MK and former Knesset Speaker Rivlin, along with many others, has cautioned against linking the two issues and characterized this linkage as an attempt to coerce Israel into concessions on the Palestinian issue. On the other hand, Prime Minister Netanyahu himself has stated that there would be no peace with the Palestinians as long as the Iranian issue remains unresolved. Recently, he accused the Construction and Housing Minister of undermining efforts on the Iranian front by promoting a plan for construction in the settlements, clearly showing the existence of such a linkage.

Israel has long been on the receiving end of international scrutiny for its policy on the Palestinian issue at large and for its settlement policy specifically. In general

terms, there is no doubt that Israel's diminished legitimacy greatly restricts its options and maneuvering space in the international arena. It seems likely that, in most scenarios, the Iranian issue will take its toll on the Israeli position vis-à-vis the Palestinian conflict. Thus if the best possible options is realized (a comprehensive agreement is reached and the Iranian military nuclear threat is neutralized), the focus both internally and externally would then revert to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and it would be Israel's turn to make concessions. If on the other hand negotiations collapse or become long drawn out, and Israel tries to garner international support for firm action, military or otherwise, certainly its need for legitimacy will result in increased pressure on the Palestinian front. Of course, with or without the Iranian nuclear program, Israeli security concerns are best served by serious negotiations with the Palestinians on the basis of the well-known equation of 1967 borders with land swaps.

The bottom line

The interim agreement signed in Geneva on November 24, 2013 between the P5+1 and Iran is not catastrophic for Israel or the Middle East, especially given the available policy alternatives. For all the reasons mentioned above, Israel should now adopt a constructive approach that would keep it relevant and engaged in the negotiation process. It does not need to like the agreement, but it does have to work with the reality it has now created. Most importantly, Israel has to keep its eyes on the ball, the ball being the Iranian advance towards military

nuclear capability. Other problematic issues between Israel and Iran remain open, but they will not be resolved within the framework of current negotiations, nor are they as menacing as the nuclear issue.

A Board member of the Council for Peace and Security, **Helit Barel** is a former managing director of the Council for Peace and Security in Israel and director of Israel's National Security Council.

The Geneva Interim Agreement – Iran’s Pawn Sacrifice on its Way to Superpower

by Ephraim Sneh

The basic mistake of those who negotiate with Iran is that they just do not understand the character and nature of this regime.

This regime is based on ideology, from which stem its aspirations and goals.

This is a radical Islamic Shi’ite ideology that views the Islamic religion in its Shi’ite version as the spiritual foundation on which the Iranian state is built. According to the Ayatollahs leading Iran, the role of the regime is to serve this ideology. The highest governmental principle of the regime is called Velayat-e faqih, meaning “the supremacy of religious leader.” This means that the supreme source of authority in the Iranian state is the Supreme Religious Leader, not the elected president or prime minister. This is a theocracy, rule of religion. The regime tries to enforce Sharia law and the Muslim code of conduct within the country. There are many expressions of this: separation between men and women, discrimination against women, death by stoning for adultery, prohibitions on music and Western dress, and many other restrictions in all spheres of life. These prohibitions are enforced with great brutality by the Basij police, a paramilitary militia of volunteers who are faithful to the regime, a kind of “religious moral police.” For example, the Basiji will publically flog a woman caught in “immodest” clothing in the middle of the

street. They also suppress opposition demonstrations with particular brutality.

Iran is a democracy in outward appearance only, and everything is subordinate to the directives of the Supreme Leader. Nowadays everyone is impressed by elected President Hassan Rouhani, but they ignore the fact that he is the most moderate (relatively speaking) out of a series of about a dozen candidates. These were all approved by the Council of Guardians, subordinate to the Supreme Leader. Hundreds of other candidates were disqualified by the Council of Guardians for not being members of Khamenei’s inner circle. The same process exists for elections to the parliament. Only candidates authorized by the Council of Guardians can enter the race.

The regime’s official ideology holds that Iran must aspire to become a global leader of the world’s Muslims, 1.25 billion human beings. Therefore, it must export the Islamic revolution to all the Islamic countries and become a superpower. In the words of the former president of Iran, “... America is the setting sun, and Iran is the rising sun.” Iran aspires to regional hegemony on its way to becoming a global power. So far, Iran has succeeded in imposing its authority on Nouri al-Maliki’s Iraqi government, and is doing the same in Lebanon via Hezbollah. Iran exerts all its strength so as not to lose its control of Syria by intervening militarily on the side of Bashar Assad’s regime.

Iran established the Quds Force [“Jerusalem Force”], a clandestine arm of the Revolutionary Guard, under the command of Major-General Qasem

Soleimani. This force is tasked with exporting Iranian influence abroad via political subversion and terror. The Quds Force is active in dozens of countries around the world, relying mainly on local Shi'ite populations wherever it operates: in West Africa, Latin America, Azerbaijan. However, active and semi-dormant Iranian intelligence cells, as well as the Quds Force, exist in dozens of states around the world. These cells have already been activated in many countries to carry out terrorist attacks: in Tbilisi, New Delhi, Baku, Bangkok, Buenos Aires and others. An important reminder: the lethal terror attack on the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires took place when Hassan Rouhani served as Iran's Head of the Supreme Council of National Security.

Terror and subversion are only one tool used to enlarge Iranian influence in the world. Another tool of a different nature is their deployment of long-range missiles. Today, Iran possesses ballistic missiles with a range of 2,000 kilometers [1,243 miles], covering the countries of the Middle East. It also has ballistic missiles that cover Moscow, New Delhi and Athens. Iran continues to develop these missiles and within only a few years, their range will reach 3,500 kilometers [2,175 miles] and more. All the capitals of Western Europe will be in range. The significance of this is that Iran will be able to threaten most of the Western democracies as well as Russia, India, and Southern Asia.

Iran is developing nuclear weapons, first and foremost, as its entrance ticket to the club of the world powers. But the

mounting of nuclear weapons on long-range missiles smacks of dangerous blackmail and extortion. There is no comparison between the damage done by an Ashoura missile warhead carrying 500 kilograms [1,102 pounds] of conventional explosives, to the same missile carrying a nuclear bomb. No nation will dare disobey Iran once the country threatens to use its nuclear weapons. With the combination of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles, Iran will be able to launch attacks on dozens of countries. This will turn Iran into a superpower, exactly as the Ayatollahs in Tehran want.

Another tool that the regime wants to leverage in its quest for the status of a superpower is oil or, to be more precise, oil and gas. In the past, Iran produced 4 million barrels of oil a day. Now, thanks to the sanctions, this number has declined to one million barrels a day. Today, Iran has one of the largest gas reserves in the world, and these are barely exploited. Iran's goal is to increase its oil production beyond the peak it reached in the past, and to join forces with Iraq; Iraq is already in Iran's sphere of influence (except for Kurdistan). The combination of Iranian and Iraqi oil output may well surpass that of Saudi Arabia, thus threatening Saudi Arabia's previously unchallenged sway over oil supply and prices.

Meanwhile, Iran is gearing up for the removal of sanctions in order to step up its marketing of gas; this is for geopolitical goals as well as to create new sources of income for the state. Oil revenue constitutes most of Iran's

national income and it fuels the reinforcement of its military, funds its subversive activities abroad, finances its terror organizations – and only at the very end of the list is it supposed to feed the Iranian people. In other words, the oil industry is the cornerstone of the regime's existence. Therefore, sanctions may have the ability to strike a mortal blow that can undermine and overthrow the regime.

The reverse is also true: removal of sanctions can bring about the revival and expansion of the oil and gas industries, which would accelerate the realization of the regime's imperialistic aspirations and ensure its protection from internal protest and revolution. That is the meaning of Rouhani's mission in Geneva. Supreme Leader Khamenei decided to activate the 'new president with the moderate image,' in order to destroy the sanctions. Khamenei decided to sacrifice the nuclear tool – only temporarily, and in outward appearances only – in order to save the regime's financial energy tool (oil and gas). Once there is money, there will be nuclearization; if there is no money, there will be no nuclearization and the very existence of the regime is in danger. That is how we must understand Iran's recent behavior: Their ultimate purpose is to uphold the regime and fulfill their long-range aspirations.

The agreement in Geneva will achieve this. None of the Iranian nuclear installations will be harmed. None of their nuclear abilities will be irreversibly damaged. But the sanctions regimen will be destroyed. Foreign sources say that already a few months ago, the United

States was not sufficiently firm with those countries and companies that violated the sanctions. And in the future, the most convenient way to remove sanctions is to refrain from active punishment of violators. Sanctions don't have to be abolished in Congress, it is enough not to enforce them. The United States is eager for a permanent agreement with the Iranians. Washington wants to avoid a confrontation with Iran at almost any price. It is important to them that Iran should not have nuclear weapons until January 20, 2017 – the day the next president is sworn in. That is Obama's commitment, and it is important to him to stand by his word. Here, American interests dovetail with Iranian patience because the Iranians have a long-range goal, and they will agree to wait. It is worth it for them. Meanwhile they will continue to build missiles, to subvert governments that oppose them, to arm their emissaries, to enlarge and deepen the global deployment of the Quds Force, to suppress the opposition in Iran, and also build every possible component for their nuclear project. The only condition: that they do it secretly.

The large oil companies in the United States and Europe understand this. Even as you read these words, they are sending out clandestine negotiators to the Tehran regime. When the interim agreement period ends, they will already have prepared drafts of lucrative contracts that will ensure Iran's new position in the energy market. The politicians in Washington and the western capitals will not be able to withstand the pressure of the large corporations. By the conclusion of the

interim agreement period, the sanctions regime will be effectively eroded. The isolationist mood of the American nation will greatly hamper any senators who will still want sanctions against Iran. And after all, those senators will also want to be re-elected.

If the free world had any real leadership today, it would ask itself the following question: Doesn't a radical religious Muslim superpower endanger Western democracy?

When we say "Islamic expansion," Shi'ite or Sunni, what are we referring to? What values does the Tehran regime represent? This regime deeply despises everything we hold dear: democracy, openness, female equality, our culture and our lifestyle. Once this Islamic ideology is supported by the powerful tools of a superpower – oil, gas, and missiles – what power of enlightenment can possibly withstand such a regime?

Seventy years have passed since the world experienced the horrific results of the merging of the ideology of hatred with military and economic power. Unfortunately, the lesson has been forgotten. If anyone had doubts regarding the intensity of hatred that the regime in Tehran spreads to its masses, one had only to watch the television broadcast of the demonstrations organized by the revolutionary guards, precisely on the eve of the signing of the Geneva agreement.

The Jews were the first victims of Nazism, not the last. Israel's cities and towns have already been hit by thousands of rockets and missiles that

were built and funded by Iran. Hundreds of Israelis were torn to bits by demolition charges and car bombs that exploded in Israel by Iranian proxies. We are not the only ones who are worried. Just ask the Christians and Sunnis in Lebanon, the governments of the Gulf States, the Kurds and the Balochis.

The Geneva agreement seals the fates of tens of millions of people around the world, including Europe. The theocratic regime in Tehran must be destroyed, not mollycoddled. The incentives must be offered to the Iranian people, not its oppressors. The Iranian people must know that if it takes its fate into its own hands, the Western democracies will help to build a new, thriving Iran. It is not moral to encourage demonstrators in Kiev but turn one's back on the Iranian people that did not have a real opportunity to elect a president that it really wants – but were forced to choose from the candidates vetted by Ayatollah Khamenei.

Israel will defend itself and it has all the military capabilities to prevent Iranian nuclear weapons from harming Israeli citizens. It is the citizens of the Western democracies who should be very worried about the ramifications of the Geneva agreement.

General (Ret.) Dr. Ephraim Sneh is the Chairman of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Strategic Dialogue at the Netanya Academic College. Physician by profession, specialist in internal diseases. Among other command positions in Israel Defense Forces, commanded the security zone in South Lebanon and was the head of the Civil

Administration in the West Bank. In 1988, after his retirement he was appointed by Simon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin to conduct the first secret negotiations with the PLO. During his 16 years at Israel's parliament (1992-2008)

he served as Minister of Health, Minister of Transportation, twice as Deputy Minister of Defense and as chairman of the Sub-committee for Defense Planning and Policy.

Responsible:

*Dr. Werner Puschra,
Head of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel*

Authors:

*Helit Barel
Dr. Ephraim Sneh*

Translators:

Sandy Bloom (Text Ephraim Sneh Hebrew to English)

Homepage: www.fes.org.il

Email: fes@fes.org.il