

Best Possible Outcome of Difficult Negotiations?

THE IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT - A PANEL DISCUSSION HOSTED BY THE CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE EXAMINING EUROPEAN POSITIONS AS WELL AS THE FUTURE OF THE AGREEMENT

As the Iran nuclear agreement is currently being debated by the U.S. Congress and is causing concern to the American public, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace organized a panel to discuss the European position on the Iran nuclear agreement. Former French diplomat Jean-Marie Guéhenno and former German ambassador to the U.S. Wolfgang Ischinger debated together with Suzanne Maloney from the Brookings Institution about the European attitudes towards the Iran nuclear agreement as well as probable reactions to the U.S. position. They all agreed upon the fact that the Iran agreement is worth implementing and that its implications go beyond nuclear non-proliferation: The transatlantic partnership is at stake.

The European negotiators claim that the Iran agreement was a genuinely multilateral outcome, which was never debated to such an extent in Europe as it is currently in the United States. One could distinguish a split through the Atlantic by saying that the European public opinion considered the outcome to be good and sufficient, whereas the American public highlighted more critical points about the deal, although the Obama administration and the government are in favor of the outcome. In their opening remarks, the panelists mentioned different reasons for this. Mr. Guéhenno explained that the Europeans welcomed this agreement representing the outcome of four years of very difficult negotiations. In his opinion, one should bear in mind that the Europeans are much closer to the region and therefore the threat of possible nuclear weapons in the Middle East is greater. As a result, France in particular has put a lot of pressure throughout the negotiations in order to achieve non-proliferation through an

agreement built on robust verification. Therefore, the deal must be complimented by strong diplomatic engagement in the region. Mr. Guéhenno concluded his opening remarks by stating that the Europeans believed in the deal as an opportunity for change in the Middle East. He mentioned existing and planned European initiatives aiming at tackling the regional situation at its best and expressed the wish to see more of such incentives from the American partners. According to his point of view, reassurance from the U.S. ally and a concerted, effective diplomacy would improve the situation in Iran and the Middle East significantly.

Impacts of the agreement

For Wolfgang Ischinger, the Iran nuclear agreement is a historic moment. He stressed that there have always been huge differences between the EU and the U.S. with regard to Iran: The Europeans have always continued the diplomatic relations whereas the U.S. had a different approach to the region and even closed its embassy. In his opinion, it is obviously not a perfect agreement, but he highlighted that in terms of diplomatic agreements, it has already achieved a lot by including all negotiators' opinions. According to Mr. Ischinger the debate in the U.S. has not focused enough on the fact that, if the agreement was thoroughly implemented, it would cause Iran to abandon all current and future plans regarding the Uranium enrichment. This is a major achievement as normally treaties only focus on plutonium.

The former ambassador to the U.S. concluded that the Iran question also entails a bigger question on the state of the transatlantic partnership, which has become fragile due to disagreements about TTIP and the

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

USA

INGER-LUISE HEILMANN

September 2015

www.kas.de/usa

www.kas.de

www.uspolitik.info

NSA scandals. For him, the most important signal the West could send would be to implement the agreement and to stand together in confronting the multiplying crisis situations in the Middle East. Therefore, the implementation of the Iran nuclear agreement would not only be about non-proliferation, but also about the robust global positioning of the West for the next decades, which is very important.

Funding of the IAEA and future challenges

Mrs. Maloney provided an American reaction to the previous speakers. She echoed her European colleagues in underlining the unique circumstances and the transatlantic cooperation, which enabled the final agreement and must be sustained. The Brookings expert explained that the differences also exist on both sides of the Atlantic because the U.S. had joined the negotiation process relatively late under the Bush administration in 2006. Maloney identified as primary challenge for the future to ensure that the deal is sustained and that Iran acts according to the requirements. She firmly believed that at this moment, it is absolutely critical for the U.S. and the European partners to intensify their cooperation on Iran and to tackle the situation in the region. As a result the Iran agreement should be rapidly accepted and implemented.

Mr. Guéhenno added that as far as the deal's implementation is concerned, the IAEA, especially, would need to be well funded and required a strong role. Furthermore, the participants explained that the agreement is under no circumstances built on mutual trust, but on intrusive verification measures and the possibility of so-called snap back sanctions. These have been included so that in the case the Iranian administration fails at implementing and executing the deal, the negotiating parties would have concrete guidelines on how to react and to restore the sanctions. Mr. Guéhenno explained that the snap back provisions do not allow for the possibility of vetoes in the United Nations in order to put sanctions back in place. Mr. Ischinger was surprised by this unprecedented maneuver, as China and Russia agreed to suspend their traditional veto power. The panel agreed that these provisions are a significant achievement, which further strengthens the deal's credibility. The former diplomats stressed that the agreement has to be considered a long-term process, which will take many years. In diplomacy, 15 years is a

very long time, and if there was no agreement, by then Iran would be a significant nuclear power. The panelists further suggested that the Iran nuclear agreement would not only tackle non-proliferation, but if implemented correctly, could also allow to engage in an exchange with Iran on the relationship with Saudi Arabia, the Israeli-Palestine questions, human rights, or terrorism which would be a major achievement. Mr. Ischinger also highlighted the relations to Yemen, the problems of ISIS in Syria and Iraq that could be discussed once a new security architecture would have been installed in the Middle East with the help of the agreement. Moreover, it would be of the utmost importance to reintegrate Iran in the world economy as fast as possible.

The final point the representatives made focused on the unique nature of the 5+1 which has enabled the U.S. and Russia to negotiate with Iran outside of the traditional structures. As it is unlikely that Russia will soon be part of the G8 again, Mr. Ischinger suggested it would be desirable to use such a format in order to handle the Syrian and Ukrainian crisis. Mr. Guéhenno seconded this idea, adding that the Middle East is a top strategic and domestic priority for Russia due to their geographic proximity. This means that a reshaping of that region would never be possible without Russia's consent and therefore negotiations including Moscow should be continued.

In conclusion, the speakers highlighted the opportunities that the Iran nuclear agreement offers, and countered criticism by explaining the deal's mechanisms and provisions. The panelists' comments suggest that the future challenges lie in the surveillance of the implementation of the agreement and to an even greater extent in the need for a closer transatlantic cooperation on that issue. They agreed on the fact that the 5+1 format was a unique forum for negotiations that could be used to tackle other problems as it offers the advantage of including Russia at the negotiating table. Each of the panel's speakers expressed their support for the agreement, which according to them is not perfect, but the best possible outcome of difficult negotiations.