



Centro Studi Internazionali

The Lausanne agreement and the future bet on Iran

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On the past 2nd of April, in Lausanne, the so called 5+1 groups and Iranian negotiators reached a political agreement on the nuclear issue that should be the guideline for the definition of the final deal by the deadline, on the 30th June. If enforced in the upcoming months, the arrangement should bring a considerable reduction to the actual Iranian nuclear capability, both for nuclear fuel produced and for level of technology used. According to this agreement, in fact, Teheran would have consented to:

- Limit for 15 years the uranium enrichment percentage at 3.67% and its stock of low-enriched uranium to 300 kilograms;
- Keep almost 5.000 first-generation centrifuges (out of 19.000 actually installed) and to interrupt the installation of those of the new-generation ;
- Modify the project of the Arak heavy-water reactor (IR-40) that, had it been finished, would have allowed Iran to convert the exhausted nuclear fuel into plutonium (the so called reprocessing)
- Allow the International Agency for Atomic Energy (IAEA) to control all the fissile materials production chain (uranium mines, uranium mills, sites for centrifuges production and for fuel stock)

Although the deal has been received as an historic turning point, several obstacles still could jeopardize a definitive solution of the Teheran nuclear dispute. The political nature of the agreement, which aims at reaffirming the mutual interest in finding a squaring of the circle rather than defining technical quibbles, seems to have pushed negotiators not to put on the Lausanne table thorny dossiers, which could have threatened any development in the talks. Above all, the sanctions issue, being a crucial aspect of the Iranian government's agenda, proved to be decisive for the success of the negotiation. In spite of the approaching deadline, mediators' stances about this topic are still strict: on one side, the Iranian government is proposing that all the sanctions will be nullified upon the signing of the final deal. On the other hand, the international negotiators are proposing for a gradual reduction of the sanctions, bount to the implementation of the final dispositions. Therefore, a second sore spot, strictly linked to the previous one, could be represented by the long-standing issue to agree upon a checking mechanism that would allow the International Community to verify the stable compliance of the commitment by the Iranian government.

In this context, a great help could come from IAEA, which, since September 2013, is carrying on a cautious but, since now profitable, collaboration path with Iranian authorities to shed light on the nature and the range of Teheran's nuclear program.

Since the signing of the Joint Plan of Action (in November 2013) an agreement between IAEA-Iran and Iran-5+1 channels had already been reached, in the event that on the next 30th June a final deal was achieved, the Agency itself could become that guarantee international negotiators hoped for so long a time to assure the transparency of Iranian behavior in the months after the signing. In fact, if the IAEA evaluations should be effectively binding for the elimination of sanctions, not only would the Agency's bargaining power towards Teheran be reinforced, but also the Iranian Government could be willing to grant a wider availability and margin to maneuver to the Agency, so as to take advantage to possible reliefs agreed upon.

In a similar eventuality, for example, Iran could accept to ratify the Additional Protocol on Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is still pending. To assure a real transparency by the side of signing States on their nuclear activities, this Protocol gives international IAEA's inspectors the possibility of adopting extraordinary measures, such as free access, with short notice, to all buildings on the nuclear site or building suspected to host non-declared research and experimentation activities. Moreover, it can't be excluded that the Agency's super partes nature, on one side, and the necessity of preventing any obstacles to the lift of international sanctions on the other side, could bring Iranian authorities to let inspectors, by virtue of this

Protocol, also enter the so long argued site of Parchin, the military complex located approximately 20 kilometers from Teheran, considered by the International Community as a possible non-declared site for nuclear experimentation. In fact, IAEA's specialists more than once have suspected that inside the complex there have been high explosive simulations and that the site could host, or has already hosted in the past, a research center for miniaturizing of nuclear charges, essential technologies for gaining a nuclear capability for military aims. In spite of the persistence of several international actors, in past years Iranian authorities have always refused to include in the talks with International Community the "Parchin dossier", thought to be sensitive for national interests safeguard. Although the Iranian establishment is not considering including Parchin in any talks, in the upcoming months, the eventual positive effects created by sanction relief, could push Teheran to reconsider its stance.

In this context, the Iranian-IAEA relationship could be the ideal table to refer the resolution of technical issues, letting the P5+1-Iran inter-governmental talks safeguard the delicate political reproaching process implied in the negotiation. The possibility of granting more transparency of the development of Iranian nuclear activity, in fact, would promote the creation of a mutual, even though premature, trust that, at on the other hand, would fasten the discussion on the dossier still pending

(preventing that unresolved technical details could become real issues), at the other side, it would be a precious basis from which relaunching Iranian relations to and towards Teheran. Institutionalizing international inspectors' controls and the related creation of a structured checking mechanism for Iranian attitude could be a useful instrument also for those governments involved in the talks for which the success of the negotiation represents not only a diplomatic but especially an important political victory able to strengthen their inner consensus. In fact, the eventual subscription of a nuclear deal has polarized oppositions both in the American political stage and among Iranian leadership.

If, at the moment, the Iranian ultra conservative wings, comprising the strongest resistance to dialogue with Washington, abandon their stance in the face of eventual benefits linked to the solution of the nuclear issue, the trust factor still remains crucial for the Obama Administration, not only in assuring the signing of the deal but also determining its long term sustainability.

In so delicate a phase of the reproaching process to Teheran, a political gamble that could become an historical heritage for President Obama, Washington has to be the guarantor of the reliability of Iranian commitment towards both the American political class and the US traditional allies, in the Middle East and in Europe. Regarding

the inner front, Congress' belief in Teheran reliability, to date, not only seems necessary to implement dispositions of the future deal, but also could keep the deal safe from eventual political changes inside the White House, looking forward to the next presidential election. As established by the law approved recently, Congress will have to evaluate the deal before allowing the lift of the sanctions. This phase could have a double and antithetical effect. If Congress refused economic sanctions removal, it would be very likely that the Iranian government, who considers the resources freed by the revisal of sanctions a cornerstone of the deal, could decide to make a step back, with clear repercussions on the stability of an eventual deal.

Otherwise, if the final text of the deal persuaded Congress of Teheran's reliability, or at least of the existence of an effective checking mechanism, the validation given by the legislative body would be an important guarantee for the deal. Even though it can't be dismissed that a republican win during next elections could imply a change in US attitude towards Iran, the formulation made by the US government in those areas of the strategic priorities could push Washington to carry on a distention policy with Teheran, that would let the new Administration focus its efforts on new and more interesting scenarios, like the Pacific.

While the step through Congress could be a problem for the implementation of the final

deal, the real challenge for the White House will be played out inside the Middle East. The promotion of the dialogue with Teheran, in fact, not only has hardened the already strained relations between the Obama Administration and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but it has also raised a hard skepticism among Gulf Monarchies (with the exception of Oman, that has always been close to Teheran government), in primis by the side of Saudi Arabia, which looks at Iran as its biggest rival for the safeguard of its leadership in the region. In fact, the gradual disengagement of the United States from Middle Eastern issues, from one side, and the effort of the White House in trying to restore Iran position on the international stage from the other side, brought surrounding countries to stiffen their positions towards Shia neighbor, in order to prevent an eventual reinforcement of Iranian influence and, with that, a rapid change of the current dynamics of power in the region. The reassurance Washington has offered so far has proven ineffective: despite the recent summit, held in Washington on the last 14th May, planned by President Obama with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Head of States has been the occasion to reiterate the mutual interest in strengthening the cooperation between the US and GCC in Defence, intelligence and security issues, the Gulf allies still have several doubts on the future repercussions that the rehabilitation of Iran on the international scene could have on the stability of the Arabian Peninsula. The

absence of new Saudi King at the summit in Camp David, in fact, has revealed not only the present political strain between Washington and Riyadh, but especially Saudi Arabian awareness that, as much as the White House is keeping an open hand towards Gulf States, the rethinking of US policies in the Middle East seem directed to create a new balance inside the region. For this purpose, the restoring of the relations with Teheran could give Washington a new political shore inside a precious and complicated scenario, in which Teheran more and more seems to be a diplomatic alternative to traditional actors.

In this direction, support for Washington strategy could come from Europe: the traditional alliance with US, from one side, and the interest for the developments in the Middle East, from the others, could push European States to offer the White House their help in creating that trust towards Teheran, which is necessary to develop the relations with the Iranian government and to involve Teheran also on dossiers different from the nuclear one. First of all, the war on the Islamic State, a challenge towards which for the first time the International Community and Iran have the same strategic objectives and against which Iranian support could become, in the upcoming years, more and more decisive.

In such a delicate moment for the success of the long reproaching process between Iran and the International Community, in

which technical issues seem to be just a function to build a first trust among parties, European Union indeed could take the occasion and present itself, both to the traditional US ally and the Middle Eastern ones, as the facilitator of a dialogue that is becoming more and more crucial for the next international developments. The historic relations Europe can be proud of with several regional States (Iran but also Israel, for example) makes the UE the ideal actor to take leadership in the balance redefinition process in an area whose dynamics has consequences on the Mediterranean Sea and, so, on the Old Continent. An encouraging signal has already been given by the High Representative for External Action of European Union, Federica Mogherini, whose presence at Lausanne testified European interest in boosting its engagement for finding a diplomatic solution of the nuclear issue and, above all, for expressing a single voice in such an important matter for international balances. However, the skepticism with which some European States look at Iran (for example, France), could slow down the emergence of a pivotal European role in this direction.

To prevent this option, Italy could make a step forward and take the initiative. Looking at historical and positive bilateral relations, our Country could promote the political and economic opening toward Teheran, putting itself as an example of how the mutual trust ease the development of more structured relations which brings mutual benefits.

Promoting a broader policy towards Iran and reinforcing the commitment for a real involvement of Iranian government in the global dialect would allow Italy to reaffirm its status as the entering gate of Europe and, especially, as the driver of European commitment in transforming Iran in to a real partner on which to rely on for crisis management in a strategic scenario, such as the current Middle East.