

[Abject Surrender by the United States](#)

What does Israel do now?

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Negotiations for an “interim” arrangement over Iran’s nuclear weapons program finally succeeded this past weekend, as Security Council foreign ministers (plus Germany) flew to Geneva to meet their Iranian counterpart. After raising expectations of a deal by first convening on November 8-10, it would have been beyond humiliating to gather again without result. So agreement was struck despite solemn incantations earlier that “no deal is better than a bad deal.”



This interim agreement is badly skewed from America’s perspective. Iran retains its full capacity to enrich uranium, thus abandoning a decade of Western insistence and Security Council resolutions that Iran stop all uranium-enrichment activities. Allowing Iran to continue enriching, and despite modest (indeed, utterly inadequate) measures to prevent it from increasing its enriched-uranium stockpiles and its overall nuclear infrastructure, lays the predicate for Iran fully enjoying its “right” to enrichment in any “final” agreement. Indeed, the interim agreement itself acknowledges that a “comprehensive solution” will “involve a mutually defined enrichment program.” This is not, as the Obama administration leaked before the deal became public, a “compromise” on Iran’s claimed “right” to enrichment. This is abject surrender by the United States.

In exchange for superficial concessions, Iran achieved three critical breakthroughs. **First**, it bought time to continue all aspects of its nuclear-weapons program the agreement does not cover (centrifuge manufacturing and testing; weaponization research and fabrication; and its entire ballistic missile program). Indeed, given that the interim agreement

contemplates periodic renewals, Iran may have gained all of the time it needs to achieve weaponization not of simply a handful of nuclear weapons, but of dozens or more.

Second, Iran has gained legitimacy. This central banker of international terrorism and flagrant nuclear proliferator is once again part of the international club. Much as the Syria chemical-weapons agreement buttressed Bashar al-Assad, the mullahs have escaped the political deep freezer.

Third, Iran has broken the psychological momentum and effect of the international economic sanctions. While estimates differ on Iran's precise gain, it is considerable (\$7 billion is the lowest estimate), and presages much more. Tehran correctly assessed that a mere six-months' easing of sanctions will make it extraordinarily hard for the West to reverse direction, even faced with systematic violations of Iran's nuclear pledges. Major oil-importing countries (China, India, South Korea, and others) were already chafing under U.S. sanctions, sensing President Obama had no stomach either to impose sanctions on them, or pay the domestic political price of granting further waivers.

Benjamin Netanyahu's earlier warning that this was "the deal of the century" for Iran has unfortunately been vindicated. Given such an inadequate deal, what motivated Obama to agree? The inescapable conclusion is that, the mantra notwithstanding, the White House actually did prefer a bad deal to the diplomatic process grinding to a halt. This deal was a "hail Mary" to buy time. Why?

Buying time for its own sake makes sense in some negotiating contexts, but the *sub silentio* objective here was to jerry-rig yet another argument to wield against Israel and its fateful decision whether or not to strike Iran. Obama, fearing that strike more than an Iranian nuclear weapon, clearly needed greater international pressure on Jerusalem. And Jerusalem fully understands that Israel was the real target of the Geneva negotiations. How, therefore, should Israel react?

Most importantly, the deal leaves the basic strategic realities unchanged. Iran's nuclear program was, from its inception, a weapons program, and it remains one today. Even modest constraints, easily and rapidly reversible, do not change that fundamental political and operational reality. And while some already-known aspects of Iran's nuclear program are returned to enhanced scrutiny, the undeclared and likely unknown military work will continue to expand, thus recalling the drunk looking for his lost car keys under the street lamp because of the better lighting.

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