

Iran Negotiations Dead-End, Abraham-Accord Nonsense

US handling of the Iran peace process is by now mostly un-readable but also self-sabotaging. Subscribe to Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Our store: <https://neutralitystudies-shop-fourthwall.com> 00:00 Trump's Iran peace process looks incoherent 02:24 Why the Abraham Accords demand makes little sense 05:00 Iran's enriched uranium as a hard red line 06:00 Where the U.S. and Iran could theoretically meet 08:50 Iran's demands: bases, reparations, sanctions, and Hormuz 11:30 Why Israel and the U.S. are weaker after the war 14:20 Why Iran cannot trust U.S. treaty commitments 18:00 Iran's pressure strategy through the Strait of Hormuz 22:00 Sanctions relief and the need for a written outcome document

#Pascal

So Donald Trump is now making a very strange mockery out of the peace process with Iran. If it ever was such a process, then really what it has boiled down to is either very serious backdoor negotiations, about which they don't say anything while putting out smoke petards on the other side, or it is just an absolutely doomed negotiation enterprise from the beginning. If the things that Donald Trump is actually saying publicly and publishing on his own sites, in Truth Social and Twitter and the White House, which by now are more or less exactly the same thing, are true, then the entire process is already doomed. So the only chance that there is, is that actually what the administration is negotiating with the Iranians is something completely different from what the president puts out.

Because by now, really, the strangest thing happened probably yesterday when Donald Trump put out this Truth on Truth Social, requiring all of the West Asian and North African Muslim countries that currently do not have diplomatic relations with Israel to actually do so and join the Abraham Accords. So a lot of these Muslim countries in West Asia and on the Arabian Peninsula have never actually recognized Israel because Israel is anathema, and the Zionist state is anathema to how many of them, at least facing their own publics, see Israel and how the Middle East or West Asia should be structured. So places like Saudi Arabia never joined.

And now Donald Trump is saying that a peace agreement with Iran must include these nations, these other countries that are not part of the war, to actually join. And yes, you can make the argument that Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and so on are, of course, part of the war. They've also been hit by Iranian strikes. But at the end of the day, the actual negotiations that are happening are, of course, between Israel, the United States, and Iran, which are official parties to this armed conflict. And Mr. Trump here now says in a tweet from about 24, 48 hours ago, that negotiations with the Islamic Republic of Iran are proceeding nicely.

It will only be a great deal for all or no deal at all, and then berating a little bit Barack Obama and then saying that he talked with all of the heads of state from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and all the others, including also Turkey, by the way, and Egypt and Jordan. He talked to all of them and actually then says that these countries must join—Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain. It may be possible that one or two have reasons for not joining the Abraham Accords. Wait, he says it up here: it should be mandatory for all of these countries to, at a minimum, simultaneously sign on to the Abraham Accords.

And yes, again, it may not be possible for some of them to join, and that will be accepted, but most should be ready, willing, and able to make this settlement with Iran a far more historic event than it would otherwise be. This is... I mean, Donald Trump at this point is fantasizing about stuff for which we also have, in international relations and international law, just no precedent. There is no precedent that ever we've had non-involved third states, especially countries like Turkey or Egypt, actually become part of a peace agreement with parties that they were never at war with.

I mean, that's just something that goes over and beyond anything that we have heard or seen before. And it is something that, if Donald Trump wants to make this a requirement for a peace agreement, he seems not to make it an absolute requirement, but he seems to want to push everybody toward this. If it is a requirement, then it's the surest way to make certain that there will be no actual peace agreement, because this is simply something that all of these other states will certainly not do, even if they would like to see peace return gradually to the Gulf region. But why would third parties, uninvolved states, especially places like Turkey or Pakistan, actually join any kind of peace agreement that would then bind them and force them to recognize Israel, which has been an anathema to them for the longest time and with whom they still have a lot of beef even now?

And then at the same time, he also again kind of tweets out red lines for the United States, which they know are absolute red lines on the other side to make sure that there is no agreement. Yesterday, only 24 hours ago, he tweeted that the enriched uranium nuclear dust will either be immediately turned over to the United States to be brought home and destroyed, or preferably, in conjunction and coordination with the Islamic Republic of Iran, destroyed in place or at another acceptable location, with the Atomic Energy Commission or its equivalent being witness to this process and event.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Yeah, at this point, it's an absolutely lunatic proposal. I mean, the Islamic Republic made it absolutely clear that this is one of their red lines. They will not give up their uranium, and they will not give up the right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. The one place where they can actually meet, where these visions of what's supposed to happen can actually coincide, is with the nuclear bomb. The Iranians said they don't want the bomb. They don't want nuclear weapons. The U.S. said they can never have nuclear weapons. So actually, yes, that's exactly where they can meet.

And that's exactly where the JCPOA actually squared the circle by putting it in writing and adding a lot of guarantor states to it, including European states, including Russia, and to my knowledge, even China, that put there the clause that Iran would abide by the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is a much older treaty, which has been in force since basically the late 1960s, early 1970s, and which regulates that apart from the five nuclear weapon states—the United States, Britain, France, the Soviet Union at the time (now Russia), and China—nobody else would be legally allowed to have nuclear weapons.

We have a couple of other states who broke out of that core set and developed nuclear weapons on their own in breach of the NPT—India, Pakistan, of course, Israel, without saying so, and North Korea. But North Korea, India, and Pakistan didn't join the NPT, and North Korea actually quit the NPT before developing the weapon. So on paper, they stayed within what was expected of them. And Israel, of course, is also not a party to it, and it never officially admitted that it had nuclear weapons, but it's an open secret at this point. It's not an open secret—I don't know what to call it anymore.

It's a matter of fact. Even the Israeli politicians speak openly about it, that they should nuke the other side. So the whole point about the NPT is that it actually makes sure that states like Iran have the legal right to use nuclear technology and fissile material for peaceful purposes, especially energy and medical purposes, and that they, on the other hand, then do not develop weapons out of this. And this is what Iran is perfectly happy with and what the JCPOA regulated and what everybody, including the IAEA, attested that they are keeping to. So this is definitely the realm of the possible. What then happens with the Strait of Hormuz and all of the downstream problems this war between the United States and Iran created, that's a different matter.

And that's definitely what they are negotiating. And the Iranians made it very clear that the United States military bases must be gone. There must be reparations paid to Iran, especially also by the war coalition of the Gulf states that helped by providing their territories and their airspace to the attacker, to the aggressor. And all of those demands, the Iranians actually also base on international law, where it actually is written that if attacked, then states have a right to demand reparations. So the Strait of Hormuz, again, is one more question. But those are the things that can be negotiated. But the others that we've seen before, like the requirement of third states to join this peace agreement, that is a fantastic idea.

And it actually, to me, raises the question whether any of this is actually meant to be serious. I mean, first of all, is the process, the peace process itself, from the United States' part, meant to be serious? Or is it really, as many of us are fearing, just another deflection, this time for the United States to reload and re-strategize and then push forward again with the next wave of attack? That is, of course, the kind of worst-case scenario that we might imagine the United States is actually after, that Donald Trump wants to actually see happen. Then there's the other option, that it's absolute ineptitude to properly lead a peace process.

And the third option is that this is, again, also just a smokescreen in order to somehow please the Israelis, who are at this point the loudest spoilers, possible spoilers, in this entire process. Because on their side, it is Iran that is demanding that Lebanon is made part of this. But they actually have, at this point, a much stronger claim over what they want to see happen in the region and whatnot, because again, they basically won the 40 Days War with the U.S. and Israel. And they are not accepting if Israel keeps bombing Lebanon and Hezbollah and just continues slaughtering people in its neighborhood, and they want that part of the entire arrangement. We are seeing also at the moment how, of course, Israel is again in breach of the current ceasefire agreement, because the current ceasefire that was negotiated between Iran and the U.S. includes Lebanon. And in theory, the U.S. should actually try to enforce the ceasefire also with Israel, which it doesn't.

Israel is currently, as we speak, slaughtering people in southern Lebanon. It's still attacking Lebanon, in southern Lebanon. As always, Israel understands a ceasefire as meaning the other one ceases to fire while you keep genociding their people on their lands. The surprising thing to me is that Iran actually hasn't used this yet as a reason to strike back at Israel, which to me seems to indicate that despite having had the upper hand militarily, they too do not want to go back to the kinetic phase of the war. Of course, the war is not over, and there's this extended maritime blockade being implemented by the United States against Iran.

Iran, and that itself is also, of course, an act of war, so the warfare is not done, but the kinetic kind of bombing of each other is over. And Iran, at any point in time, could use all of these infringements of the ceasefire agreement that Israel is committing on its part as a reason to actually say, like, no, we are going to continue now bombing Israel. But it seems to me that Tehran at this moment is rather wishing to consolidate on the negotiating table the facts that have been more or less created during these 40 very bloody days on their end. But that would require, of course, the United States to live up to the terms of the first ceasefire agreement and then come to an understanding with Iran in order to move toward a proper peace agreement.

And on this part, I would just like to say that there is a lot of skepticism by now, and I'm highly skeptical as well, that any of this is achievable. There was a very good discussion the other day, yesterday, on The Duran, the channel of Alexander Mercouris and Alex Christoforou that they jointly do, in which they were discussing how possible it is, how realistic it is, that we will get to a proper agreement. And both of them accurately pointed out that what we are talking about right now is just to consolidate the ceasefire into a memorandum of understanding, to actually extend it to 60 days, and to have basically a framework agreement on how to get again toward a peaceful relationship in the Gulf region. But that is miles away from an actual peace treaty, and that is absolutely true.

Although this memorandum of understanding, this MOU, would definitely be one of the most achievable things that we can think about at the moment, the problem is, of course, that these MOUs are very easy to break and very easy to just go over and beyond because they're basically non-binding documents. They're just pieces of paper that outline how both sides see what the future should hold, but they don't carry weight under international law. And even if they did, we've seen

how the United States has treated, for instance, the JCPOA, which was international law and which should have bound the U.S., but which it then just simply left and quit. And then also we see how the U.S. is not constrained by any kind of treaty document.

For instance, the U.N., the United Nations Charter, forbids wars of aggression, and this is clearly a war of aggression. So the U.S., in many, many different ways at the current moment, is breaking its agreements. So the question is really, why would Iran even go along with this? And the answer to me is most likely that, what else would you do? You do need to get to some form of future with your neighbors and extended neighbors. And the United States is also something that won't go away, but you need a way to deal with it. And Iran has dealt now with the United States militarily, and it has actually stood its ground, and it has taught the U.S. and Israel that they are not invincible.

On the contrary, yes, Israel and the U.S. are able to strike Iran and to hurt them badly and to put parts of Tehran on fire. Yes, they're able to do that, but they are not able to take away Iran's second strike capability. And this is something that is actually quite new in this war. Until now, we used to think of second strike capability solely in the nuclear realm, right? When we talk about second strikes, we usually talk about mutual assured destruction and this deterrent structure in which when one nuclear weapon state shoots nukes at the other one, the one that gets shot at still maintains the capacity to shoot its nukes at the other party, and then both of them die, right? That's how we thought about second strike capabilities.

Iran has now in this war proven that conventional second strike capabilities are enough to actually, when war breaks out, then deter the other one back into stopping it. That's what we've seen. Forty days of kinetic war, and Iran succeeded in making the U.S. and Israel stop. On the one hand, because the U.S. and Israel started running out of weaponry, but on the other hand also because Iran was at any point in time able to hit back at U.S. targets with their conventional strike capacities, their missiles and their drones, at targets of roughly equal value to whatever the U.S. and Israel bombed in Iran, and thereby sending home the message that, yes, you can attack these things, but we will at any point in time destroy one of yours and you will suffer.

If we suffer, you suffer. And they made that very, very clear, to the point where actually the U.S. and Israel wanted to stop the kinetic phase. Now we're in this different phase, in this phony type of war, where the U.S. is continuing its siege warfare with the hope of destroying Iran at some point. But also in that one, the Iranians are proving that they can survive this and that they can continue. The Iranians, on their side, are now trying to increase the hurt through the Strait of Hormuz, to do extended damage to the U.S. and its allies, and increase pressure through that method to force the United States to somehow stop also this one. And within that process, the Iranians were always open for diplomacy after the first 40 days of kinetic warfare.

So the point now is that you need some form, some form of something that will optimally lead to a proper security structure in West Asia. And from the Iranian side, it seems to me the tactic is to stand your ground, keep negotiating, and then once this MOU has been agreed on, has been signed,

part of the process that will probably be in the MOU, they want to take it to the United Nations. Now, why do they want to do that? To me, it's very clear. It's simply because a bilateral agreement with the United States that, in order to become a proper treaty, would have to be ratified by Congress has zero chance of ever passing through Congress.

Hell no. The Lindsey Grahams in there, they will vote that down and shout that down so bad. And we know that AIPAC basically bought most of the people on both sides of the aisle. So there's no chance that there will be a treaty agreement coming out, a bilateral treaty agreement coming out of this MOU ever. However, there is this trick to get around that, and that's by going directly to the UN. The UN ambassador that sits there actually answers to Donald Trump in the Security Council. I'm talking now about the Security Council. The five permanent members, they all have their ambassadors there, right? And this ambassador answers to the executive, answers to Trump.

If there is an agreement between the Trump faction of the White House and the Iranians to actually go through this process, and Trump orders the Iranians or the Americans to jointly table a Security Council resolution that actually reflects a proper agreement that they have amongst themselves, if that is tabled and Donald Trump orders his ambassador to the UN to not veto it—maybe not even vote in favor, but at least not veto it—and it passes through the Security Council and becomes a Security Council resolution, then that resolution, by virtue of the U.S. being a member of the UN, actually then gains also toward the U.S. a treaty status. That is not to say that the United States will keep to it.

I mean, we've seen how the United States treats the U.N. Charter in general, and this prohibition of the use of force and whatnot, and we know that the U.S. doesn't really keep to a lot of its agreements. But that is kind of, from an Iranian perspective, probably the best kind of document you can get that would also then serve the purpose of giving a bit of legal clarity, of legal backing, to the doves within the United States. Because once you have a Security Council resolution, and once it has treaty status, and once, in theory, it should then also be part of how the United States constitutionally works, then peace factions could try to use that in order to sue anyone or future warmongers who are in breach, or were in breach, of that treaty.

I mean, it's not happening at the moment, and it might look a bit idealistic, but that's the point. It's like, what else can you get? How else can you get back to a modus vivendi that doesn't rely upon the constant use of force? And again, Iran also wants the sanctions gone, right? It wants to be finally able, maybe not to trade with the United States, but at least to trade with European and other states who are willing to trade with them without automatically triggering banking sanctions and horrible, horrible disasters for anyone trading with them. So that would be a huge plus.

So all of these things they want there, and they want it in a written document in the end. And in my view, they wanted to run it through the UN because it is the most likely place to then create an outcome document that's not just important for the US, but also important for other states. And once it exists, it will be what Iran can use in order to demand that others also lift their sanctions on

them. And then as something that can be used further down the line in order to push back against the entire European pro-war faction that just wants to continue sanctioning Iran. So in my view, that's the strategy at the moment.

And from the Donald Trump side, I cannot tell whether any of the things that he tweets out there and puts into the ether have any value at all in terms of trying to understand what they actually want. At this point, most of it seems to be an utter smokescreen. I don't know toward whom it is directed. Again, this Abraham Accord tweet or idea that the other Muslim nations also need to join the Abraham Accords as part of the peace deal is obviously something that will not happen and might be meant to pacify Israel, might be meant to sabotage the process, might be meant to get us busy in the commentariat talking about it in order to not focus on something else.

So a red herring out there that I fell for, maybe. It's anyone's guess. It's just I want to remind everybody again, there has never been any kind of peace treaty in which uninvolved third parties had to become members in order for them to be valid or to go forward. Even the... The United Nations, the charter of the UN, was made in a different way, also with its flaws, but made in a different way. I mean, there's no example for anything like this that Donald Trump is dreaming up here. So the expectations that it's just another... another petard from the White House are quite high.

It will be very interesting one day to find out what the actual negotiators, the actual diplomatic team was trying to do and trying to achieve. At this point, it's anyone's guess. But this, if it's meant seriously, it won't go anywhere and at most will buy the United States some time to lose another day. And if it is meant as a tactic toward Israel, then, well, we'll see how far that one will get. This, and I didn't even talk about Brian Berletic's argument that overall the United States will just continue using Israel as a way for its great power influence. But that's also material for another day. Thank you very much for your time.