

Larry Johnson & Mohammad Marandi: US-Iran Deal: Breakthrough or Breakdown?

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#Nima

As I told Nima, this is like you've got an invitation to attend a wedding on Friday, and the bride and groom still have not signed a prenup, and they haven't exchanged rings yet. So you know what? The words on paper are nice, but it's not an agreement yet. And I personally am skeptical. I don't doubt that, you know, Iran's put out its version of what the agreement is. The United States still hasn't. And man, Trump, the Zionist lobby is just beating the hell out of Trump right now. You know, he's taking a drubbing. And I don't know how long he can stand up to it. And the other thing is, you know, Iran says, okay, yeah, we're going to lift the blockade in 30 days, and they'll be under Iranian arrangements, which means they're going to pay a resort fee. I like to use the language they use in Las Vegas — you pay a resort fee.

Okay? You didn't have to, you know, 25 years ago in Vegas, you didn't have to pay a resort fee. Now you go to Vegas, you've got to pay a resort fee, which is usually, you know, like one-third the cost of the hotel room to start with. In the United States, Trump said, no, no, no, it's toll-free. And so I'm saying, a little bit of disagreement there, or we're lifting the blockade immediately, except we're going to continue to stop and inspect Iranian ships that might be carrying Chinese technology, military equipment. And I'm saying, I don't know. Last time I checked, that's still called a blockade. So show me the actual. Let's see the money. Let's see the withdrawal of U.S. ships. Let's see the lifting of the actual sanctions. Then I'll be a believer. Right now, I'm still from Missouri. You've got to show me.

#Larry

Professor Marandi, I think the point that Larry just raised is so important. But before getting there, we had the Israeli attack on Lebanon, and Iran has decided not to attack Israel, not to retaliate. What was that? Can you explain?

#Mohammad

Sure. Well, as you know, the two sides were somewhat close to an agreement, but they still had significant differences. And then the Americans tried to impose new conditions. This was like a couple of weeks ago or so, and Iran said, we're not discussing these. And then there was a stalemate. So the Israeli regime bombed Beirut. Iran responded and struck the Israeli regime. The American Navy attacked Iran on multiple occasions. The Iranians responded in a heavy-handed way. And then on Wednesday, I think—sorry, it's 3 a.m. right now, it's Wednesday. Out of fear of Nima and out of my friendship with Larry, I'm on the show. But it's really Nima's threats that forced me to come on at 3 a.m. God bless you.

Thank you. And you too. And Nima. So the gap between the two sides continues. The Qataris on Wednesday sent a delegation informing the Iranians that those demands were withdrawn. So we went back to where we were a couple of weeks ago. But the gaps remain. Now, what Trump said, yes, the day before yesterday, I guess—I don't know, it's 3 a.m. here, so I don't know—but, you know, earlier, not yesterday, the day before, depending on which calendar we're looking at. Yeah, because here it's Monday now. Contrary to what Trump said, there wasn't an agreement. Contrary to what the Pakistani prime minister said, with all due respect, there was not an agreement. There was not a final text. So, there was a stalemate.

And yesterday, meaning your today, I spoke with a couple of people who were involved, and they were saying it's unclear what will happen. This was like 12 hours ago, 10 hours ago. Then Netanyahu makes the biggest and most stupid mistake possible. He goes and attacks Beirut at a time when we were in a stalemate. And Iran had demands, and the Americans were not accepting them. And Iran was not going to back down. So this fool bombs Beirut, and the Iranians say, we're going to hit you. And it was clear as day that Iran was going to strike. And the Iranians were preparing. And then in the negotiations, Trump, out of deep concern—and I think the only thing I can think of is that Trump knows that the United States is going to fall off a cliff.

The U.S. economy is going to fall off a cliff, and he knows this. So he's just saying, no, please don't attack. And the Iranians said, we're going to attack. And so at the negotiations, which ended two and a half hours ago—roughly two and a half hours ago—the United States conceded key demands by Iran. The Israeli regime has to end the wars on all fronts, and it has to end the occupation of Lebanon. And the siege on Iranian ports has to end immediately, and on Friday, Iran will allow the ships to move through the Strait of Hormuz. But the point is, and there are other things too, but I don't know everything, because no one's answering phones from now on. A couple of people who I did call, they didn't pick up, and they'll probably curse me tomorrow.

#Larry

So I don't have too many.

#Mohammad

I don't have details. But the important thing is that the United States conceded these points because of Netanyahu. Now, either Netanyahu abides by his side, abides by Trump's commitments, and it's a catastrophic defeat for Netanyahu, or he doesn't, and he humiliates Trump. And the world sees him as the reason for the imminent economic crisis, because he is the one who's impeding the implementation of the deal. So for Netanyahu, it is a lose situation. If Netanyahu does not abide by Trump's commitment, Iran will not abide by its commitments. So whatever happens, Trump loses and Netanyahu loses. If Trump does not implement, it doesn't look good for him. If Netanyahu does not implement, it looks horrible for both of them. But Iran does not have any expectations.

Iran's demands have been met. They must be implemented immediately—like Lebanon, Iran's assets, and the end of the siege. If it doesn't happen, we won't carry out our side of the bargain for obvious reasons. So even if Trump does not implement the deal, or if Netanyahu doesn't implement the deal, Iran wins. But Iran will punish Netanyahu. More importantly, Netanyahu will be seen as the one who, for almost three and a half months, has been pushing the world toward a catastrophe. And now, right before the global economy falls off Niagara Falls, Trump is trying to hold it back, and Netanyahu is saying, nope, let's just let it go over the falls. So it will be a political victory for Iran either way.

#Larry

Yeah.

#Nima

Yeah, just a point I made earlier before you got on, Sayed, was that Trump has the power. He does have the levers to coerce and force Netanyahu, but I'm not sure he's got the will. And I don't think he's got the political spine to do it.

#Mohammad

I agree. The Iranians are not at all counting on smooth sailing. But in any case, we now have an acceptable deal for the Iranian people—major concessions by the United States. And if the United States chooses not to implement it, the world will not blame us. They'll blame the United States and the Israeli regime. The Iranian people will see that we've negotiated a good deal. Some people are still unhappy. They're saying we should, like, I don't know, continue with the war. But I think that this agreement, for now, is better than striking the Israeli regime. Because if the Israeli regime, now that they're committed to end the killing and to end the occupation, that, I think, is preferable. We don't want any more, because they're massacring women and children every day, day and night.

They're just slaughtering people across Lebanon. This is another Gaza being repeated. And so if Iran can force the Netanyahu regime and the Zionist regime to prevent it from continuing this genocide in Lebanon, that is a huge defeat. It's much better, it's much greater than lobbing missiles and striking

targets in Israel, although I'm sure people across the world would be very happy to see Iran fire those missiles. But if Iran could get something much bigger instead, I think that's an even bigger achievement. And what is best of all, perhaps, is to see this clash between Trump and Netanyahu. Because either way, Iran's adversaries and the world's adversaries, they lose. Both of them lose.

#Larry

I think the crucial question right now is, Professor Marandi, if Israel continues with the attacks in the southern part of Lebanon, if they do something new in Dahieh, in Beirut, does that mean that Iran is going to close the Strait of Hormuz and then attack Israel? Does it mean that?

#Mohammad

Yes, they will definitely close the Strait of Hormuz. And in my opinion—of course, I don't know this, I'm speculating—just as yesterday, or today, I said that Iran will punish the Israeli regime. And then I didn't have information, but I thought it would. No one told me that they're going to attack, but I assumed that they would, based on my understanding of Iran. And they plan to do so. So Iran will continue the siege, and Iran will punish the Israeli regime. Iran has already fired missiles at the regime, and it has hit them pretty hard—hit them much harder than the Israeli counterstrikes.

And then, of course, Iran responded to those counterstrikes. The Israelis have already lost the 12-day war. But even this confrontation that we had a few days ago, it was not Iran that asked for it to end. And so right now, we are in a situation where the ball is in Trump's court. Trump either has to implement the deal—and that means Netanyahu has to implement the deal—or there's no deal. And the world sees Trump as incapable and incompetent, and Netanyahu as unwilling or determined to destroy the global economy.

#Larry

I think, Larry, you can come in with the case of Trump. I think that what Professor Marandi just mentioned is so important for Donald Trump. If he doesn't control Israel, they're going to get back to the same thing that they were having before the agreement.

#Nima

Yeah, I'm not sure how long Iran will wait to see if Trump fulfills his promise. Because, again, when you go through the document that the MERS folks released, there's a lot of ambiguity in there. And it's going to be up to Iran to say, no, we've got to tighten up on all of this as we're talking. So, permanent, immediate halt of war on all fronts means now—not tomorrow, not next week, but now. So if by the end of Monday Israel is still carrying out attacks in Lebanon, that'll be a violation of that. The complete lifting of the naval blockade within 30 days—well, yeah, that's one that should have been immediate, in my view.

#Mohammad

It is immediate.

#Nima

Okay, the one that Mehr News Agency put out said complete lifting of the naval blockade within 30 days.

#Mohammad

No, that was an older one. One of the concessions that Trump gave is the lifting of the blockade now. And he tweeted that. Yes, he did. He corrected his previous tweet. So Iran will not open this trade until Friday, but the lifting of the blockade is immediate.

#Nima

Now, the thing, the other one—and this came out of Powerful Iran, the Telegram channel—said that the blockade would be lifted, but the United States would continue to interdict Iranian ships carrying cargo from China or military equipment from China. Well, in my book, that's still a blockade. They're just trying to dress it up as something else.

#Mohammad

I don't think that's in the agreement. It's the end of the blockade. I agree. If Trump does not abide by... I don't know all the details, but that's not what the Iranians are saying.

#Larry

Professor, let me read what Donald Trump himself tweeted just moments ago. He said, the deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is now complete. Congratulations to all. I hereby fully authorize the full, free opening of the Strait of Hormuz and simultaneously hereby authorize the immediate removal of the United States naval blockade. This is what he tweeted. Go ahead, Professor. I'm sorry for interrupting.

#Mohammad

Yeah, again, since it's like 3 a.m., 3:12 now, I have, I mean, I didn't have people to call before we came online. So my information is based on one phone conversation with someone who's well-informed. But I was in a rush because I had to join you, so I didn't ask him too many questions. But

what I know is that the gap between Iran and the United States, which existed till yesterday my time and today your time, ended—what did I say—two and a half hours ago? Sorry, I'm sleepy. So the negotiations ended two and a half hours ago.

So all that talk that we had a deal yesterday, or in my time, the day before yesterday, is all nonsense. We only had the deal two and a half hours ago. And what broke the deadlock was Netanyahu's stupidity and Trump feeling the need to end this now. So he gave all those multiple concessions to Iran, and that closed the gap. Now, that means an end to the occupation. It means an end to the war. It means an immediate end to the siege. In my opinion, Iran won this by far. But what Larry said is absolutely correct, that who knows what Trump will do if he wakes up in the morning and feels that if he doesn't feel well, he may change his position.

He may refrain from carrying out his commitments. And then Trump may say, well, in Lebanon, this has to happen. Then, of course, everything will fall apart. But the important thing is that at least, if it is not implemented, this is a diplomatic victory for Iran and a big defeat for Trump. Because this text will come out, and it will be a humiliation for Netanyahu, and a defeat for Netanyahu and for Trump. If it is implemented, so much the better. So in any case, whatever happens, this, I think, is an important moment. But that doesn't mean that the deal is going to be implemented, and it doesn't mean it's going to last very long.

#Larry

I think here is the answer to the question that Larry just asked you, Professor Marandi. I don't know if you saw the new statement from Iran's Supreme National Security Council, in which it says, according to the agreements reached, the war and military operations on all fronts, including Lebanon, will end immediately and permanently starting from tonight. And furthermore, the naval blockade against Iran will be immediately and completely lifted. Larry, the answer to your question.

#Nima

Yeah. Iran will test it immediately. Do the United States mean it or not? And, you know, the United States backs up. You know, I think one other factor that was at play here is really not getting much coverage. But Iran really inflicted significant damage on U.S. military assets — both, let's call it, radar communication systems, early warning systems, and aircraft in Kuwait, Al-Salem, in Bahrain at the Fifth Fleet headquarters, what's left of it. The other, the Army base in Kuwait, Prince Saud Air Base — that's the one that I was told of. PSAB got hit, and we've hardly seen any reporting on that. And then the Wafik Salti base in Jordan got clobbered. You had both Iranian and Russian sources say, hey, they destroyed or damaged 12 F-35s, which is a significant number.

So I think Iran's success, and I know that the general staff, I was told, was panicked and blaming Russia and China for providing Iran with better intelligence for targeting. And I guess that's been the case since the outbreak of the war. They started providing shortly after the 28th of February. But in

that interim period, I think we've seen a significant upgrade in Iranian anti-aircraft assets. I had noticed that during one of the last strikes, when the United States fired like 49 Tomahawks, that at least at Bandar Abbas, they took five down with Iranian air defense systems. Significant. So there has been the cooperation between China and Iran, and Russia and Iran, I think, has led to a significant upgrade in Iranian capabilities. It's also weighing in the back of the mind of at least the advisors around Trump.