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Dealing With Iran

## Negotiations hold solution

By William Green Miller

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WASHINGTON -- I went to Tehran last month for meetings on nuclear issues, and my direct engagement with Iran, which goes back 40 years, convinces me that the opportunity exists to find a peaceful, negotiated settlement on nuclear questions and, in the process, to strengthen the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The key question is whether it will be possible to maintain an effective, restraining barrier between the legitimate, peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, which all treaty members - including Iran and the United States - have agreed to eliminate.

Both countries have been using hostile, unhelpful rhetoric, which tends to obscure the problem. Still, promising technical solutions have emerged.

The key problem is how to keep peaceful use separate from nuclear weapons development so as to prevent diversion and proliferation. A year ago, Iran made a comprehensive proposal that still offers much potential.

Its principal component is that Iran would retain its right under the treaty to implement a full range of peaceful nuclear options, including fuel enrichment and fabrication. But under the proposal, Tehran would limit production of nuclear materials to amounts needed for specific, designated peaceful uses such as fueling a fixed number of nuclear power reactors.

Under this proposal, Iran and the international community would calibrate the exact amount of nuclear material needed and Iran would stay within those limits. This would be accompanied by an increase in monitoring and inspections, authorized by the additional

protocol to the nonproliferation treaty, and it would include measures to ensure warning, with enough time for action, if a sudden change or breakout were attempted.

At a conference I attended in Tehran, Iran's national security adviser, Ali Larijani, said, "Iran accepts any inspection to prevent diversion to military purposes."

During the Eisenhower administration, when I was a young U.S. diplomat in Iran, the U.S. government was urging Iran to build 22 nuclear power plants. Today, the Iranian government, backed by overwhelming public opinion, insists on pursuing that option.

By having joined the nonproliferation treaty, Iran has legally bound itself to forswear nuclear weapons. Iran was one of the first nations to do this while others in the region, including Pakistan, India and Israel, avoided the treaty and developed nuclear bombs. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has issued a fatwa, a solemn religious edict, stating that Iran will not build nuclear weapons, which he says are contrary to Islam. This pronouncement carries serious weight in Iran because it combines governmental policy with high-level religious guidance.

Can this be believed? It is necessary for the U.S. government to speak face to face with the Iranian government to find out.

U.S. officials, working closely with the French, Germans and British, are demanding that Iran close its nuclear power enrichment program, which they maintain could be easily converted to a weapons program. They insist that Iran adopt a zero-option policy, even if it has the right under the nonproliferation treaty to develop peaceful uses. Iran's leadership has said that it will not comply and that Iran has the same right as all other treaty signatories to enrich uranium and develop peaceful nuclear uses.

This is the crux of the impasse. There is no plausible scenario involving force, sanctions or threats by which either Iran or the Western powers will back down or get everything they want. But a negotiated resolution is definitely possible if the parties are willing to settle for most - but not all - of what they want.

Negotiations could lead to technically sound, enforceable agreements that meet the U.S. and European goal of ensuring that Iran will not obtain nuclear weapons while fulfilling Iran's aim of developing peaceful nuclear energy. Such an agreement would be based on the operational motto Ronald Reagan used in making arms control agreements with the Soviets: "Trust, but verify."

A verifiable agreement would need to be applicable not only to Iran but also to all the non-weapon states in the nonproliferation treaty. The science and technology exist to attain this goal of strengthening the treaty. What has been missing, but now seems possible, is the political will to negotiate in good faith, with mutual respect.

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