

Iran could gain from Russian support in JCPOA negotiations

Moscow opposes new military conflict in region

INTERVIEW

The impact of Russia's involvement in the negotiations surrounding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is advantageous for Iran. Additionally, Moscow is firmly against the prospect of a new military conflict in the region.

The influence of Russia in the negotiations surrounding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) appears to be beneficial for Iran, particularly in light of the current geopolitical landscape. The deputy of the Institute for Iran and Eurasia Studies (IERAS) highlighted that, historically, there may have been concerns regarding whether Russia's policies aligned with Iran's interests, raising the possibility that Russia could have pursued a different trajectory in nuclear negotiations. However, he stated, "now that the nuclear agreement (JCPOA) has been signed and the only remaining issue is the restoration of its implementation, it seems that Russia cannot play a seriously negative role in advancing the negotiations."

On Tuesday, Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, arrived in Iran as part of his regional diplomatic tour after visiting Turkey. Although this visit was framed within a regional diplomatic context, its relative timing with the meeting between the foreign ministers of Russia and the United States in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, as well as the telephone conversation between the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the US President Donald Trump has raised questions about Lavrov's mission in Tehran.



Mahmoud Shouri

IRNA conducted an interview with Mahmoud Shouri, the deputy of the IERAS and a senior analyst on Russian affairs on Lavrov's readiness to assist in resolving Iran's nuclear file through diplomacy, combined with the differing perspectives in Iran regarding Russia's role over the years:

Lavrov stated in a press conference with his Iranian counterpart that, in light of the existing maximum pressure on Iran, it is not negotiating, asserting, "Russia believes that the window for diplomacy is still open, and Moscow is ready to play a role in this regard." Given the current tensions in the relationship between Russia and Europe, alongside Russia and the US working towards de-escalating their relationship, what role do you think Russia can play in this context?

The reality is that the situation is exceedingly complex, and the influencing variables are changing constantly. As a result, analyzing the status and accurately determining the role of each actor and the prevailing conditions remains a challenging task. However, at present, we are confronted with the situation where Russia and the US are entering a process of normalizing their relations, attempting to resolve some of their past differences. In this process, it is natural that various issues and topics will be discussed and reviewed, and Iran's situation is likely to be one of those subjects. Amidst this, there are concerns—particularly in Iran—where some believe that the dialogues between Russia and the US may negatively impact Iran's international standing and become a topic of interaction between the two countries. However, this perspective

is, in my opinion, rather pessimistic. It is essential to recognize that Russia is currently striving to resolve one of its most significant challenges in recent years and to extricate itself from the difficult circumstances it has faced over the past three years. Therefore, as long as Moscow cannot re-establish itself as an influential player on the international stage and exert influence over other major powers like the US and Europe, it still has a long way to go. My assessment is that the discussions between Russia and the US will not have a significant impact on Iran's fate in the short term. Even if they do exert influence, it will not be negative in any way. Russia still faces numerous obstacles, and until it can resolve these issues, it will remain far from returning to a position where it can seriously influence global matters.

Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi emphasized after the second round of talks with the European Troika that the 1+5 format in the JCPOA negotiations may not be effective due to the differences arising between Russia and Europe. Following these remarks, the Russian ambassador in Tehran stressed that without China and Russia, the lifting of sanctions and the revival of the JCPOA would not be possible. In such a scenario, what do you think the path forward for Iran will be in these negotiations, assuming they commence?

In the short term, it seems unlikely that the conditions will arise for the five major global powers to convene again on the issue of Iran's nuclear program, especially given the existing rifts between Russia and Europe. However, another question arises: is there even a necessity for these meetings and discussions to take place again? Do the members of the P5+1 really need to come together once more to talk about Iran's nuclear issue? In this context, there are a number of technical matters that need to be worked out between Iran and the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Additionally, the issues surrounding the disagreements between Iran and Europe, particularly regarding the potential activation of the trigger mechanism or snapback, are special concerns between Iran and the European Troika. From Iran's perspective, it can be said that the influence of Russia and China in nuclear negotiations will certainly be beneficial, and it is in Iran's interest for some of the existing challenges with the European parties to be managed by Russia or China. In the past, there may have been concerns that Russia's policies were not necessarily aligned with Iran's interests and that Russia might pursue a different path in nuclear negotiations. However, now that the nuclear agreement has been signed and the only remaining issue is the restoration of its implementation, it seems that Russia cannot play a seriously negative role in advancing the negotiations.

In fact, Russia's current role appears to function more as a balancing factor against Europe and the challenges that have arisen with them. It seems unlikely that the Russians would be eager to activate the trigger mechanism or snapback, nor would they be pleased with European efforts to activate this mechanism. For this reason, I do not see Iran's and Russia's interests in the nuclear file as being in conflict with one another. Therefore, we should not be overly concerned about the possibility of the Rus-

sians becoming active again in nuclear negotiations. However, as I mentioned, there may not be much room for Russia to play a significant role and have a serious impact in these negotiations.

According to published reports, Syria has been one of the key topics in the discussions between the foreign ministers of Iran and Russia. Unlike Tehran, Moscow has begun engaging with the new Syrian government, and the discussions between Lavrov and Turkish foreign minister Fidan have centered around Syria as well. What do you think will happen to Iran-Russia relations in Syria given the change in government there?

The Russians have interests in Syria that remain intact. Despite the changes in the Syrian government, although some of these interests have experienced interruptions, certain Russian interests, especially in relation to their military bases in Syria, are still in place. One of Russia's primary concerns in this regard is the fate of these bases. Russia has two scenarios in mind:

The first scenario is that Russia aims to stabilize the current Syrian government so that it can extend and solidify its sovereignty over all of Syrian territory. In line with this scenario, the Russians have naturally prioritized engagement with the current Syrian government. Part of this engagement takes place through Turkey, while another part



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (1st R) leads the Russian delegation in a meeting with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi (not seen in the picture) in Tehran on February 25, 2025.

● MOHSEN VANAEI/IRNA



Given that Iran still retains some influence over various factions and groups in Syria, the Russians will seek to capitalize on Iran's assistance. Their primary objective is to keep tensions in Syria under control and ensure that the situation does not jeopardize Russian interests in the country.



US President Donald Trump (L) and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, give a joint news conference at the Presidential Palace in Helsinki, Finland, on July 16, 2018.

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