

to carve out a role in global and regional developments, using this strength to push forward its political and economic goals. However, Russia's attack on Ukraine dealt a heavy blow to Europe's standing and position, effectively undermining the normative power and the defense of human rights and democracy that Europeans had consistently put at the forefront of their foreign and security priorities.

Europeans had a different view of Russia compared to the US, which believed Russia should be kept in check beyond its borders; Europe thought Russia should be contained within its own borders and Moscow's political developments should be influenced. The issue of Ukraine and Georgia's NATO membership and NATO's expansion near Russia, which the US supported, was a major point of disagree-

ment with Europe. Due to its stance on Russia, Europe had very strong economic and trade ties with Russia. Before the Ukraine war, Europe's trade volume with Russia stood at €370 billion, while US-Russia trade was only \$26 billion. But Russia's attack on Ukraine turned Europe's security paradigm upside down and dealt a severe blow to it. Prior to this attack, Europe had been operat-

ing under NATO and US security umbrellas to advance its goals, but after the attack, it lost its foothold and is now trying to play its role in security either without or alongside the US. Europe, especially France, had tried in recent years to step up and play an active role in the Middle East, but Israel's devastating attacks on Gaza and Europe's passive stance in the face of these assaults seriously

tarnished its credibility in the region. France had previously claimed to wield influence in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, but this time it fell short. Alongside these developments, Arab countries, despite their convergence with the West as a main strategy, after the 2019 attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities (Aramco), came to realize they cannot rely solely on the West and Europe and must strike a

balance by building ties with other powers like China and Russia. This shift in approach has further weakened Europe's position in the region. Moreover, Arab countries, unlike before, no longer back European policies against Tehran, which is another factor that has dented Europe's influence in the Middle East.

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Iran takes positive view of Oman's nuclear proposal

By Mohsen Pakaein
Former Iranian ambassador to Azerbaijan

OPINION

Two distinct approaches have come to light in the ongoing indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States. On one hand, there are the two delegations, sitting down at the table under Oman's mediation, where talks have been marked by mutual respect, professionalism, and a willingness to put forward reasonable requests and consider both parties' interests. On the other hand, outside the negotiating room, US officials have trotted out positions and attitudes that run directly counter to what is being discussed inside. They bring up unreasonable demands and seem intent on pushing for purely American interests, with little regard for Iran's. Such maneuvers naturally hamper the talks, raising doubts about the true intentions of US officials in entering these negotiations. It is clear from the proceedings that the negotiations have been professional and respectful, and a decision has been made to car-

ry on. This is a positive sign, indicating that both sides remain keen to stick with diplomacy over confrontation, and are striving to work through their differences peacefully at the negotiating table. The Iranian side has laid its cards on the table with complete transparency, insisting on its logical and immutable principles, especially the right to nuclear energy, which is not up for negotiation or compromise. Iran has made it clear — and has stated so forcefully — that it will not head down the path of building a nuclear bomb, and is intent on seeing the sanctions imposed against it lifted. These principles have been spelled out by Iran, but unfortunately, the American side does not sing from the same hymn sheet. Inside the negotiations, they nod along with Iran's positions and show respect, but outside, they call for a complete halt to Iran's nuclear program and remain silent on the lifting of sanctions. If the talks are to bear fruit, the Americans must take on board Iran's fundamental and unchangeable positions. If their aim is truly to ensure Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons, this is not a tall order. Iran can put in

place the necessary safeguards, and the Americans, for their part, should scrap the sanctions. As for the details of Oman's proposal, which came up in the fifth round of talks, there is no news to report, and speculation is not warranted. What is clear is that the way both Iran and the US have reacted to Oman's initiative suggests that Iran is taking a positive view, while the Americans are set to go back and forth with their own capital. For now, the proposal remains in limbo. Regarding the meeting between US top negotiator Steve Witkoff and the Mossad chief just before the fifth round of talks, several points about Israel's role must be considered. Israel now finds itself in its weakest political position, with its global standing taking a hit and public revulsion toward the regime on the rise. Never since the creation of this fake regime has it been so beleaguered. Beyond the attacks from Yemen, Israel's decision to send the Mossad chief to meet Witkoff in person only highlights its weakness. If Israel had real clout, it could have phoned in its opinions from Tel Aviv, and Witkoff could have, as in the JCPOA era, toed the Israeli



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) talks with his Omani counterpart, Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi, in Oman's capital minutes before the third round of Iran-US talks on April 26, 2025.
● IRNA

line without fuss. The presence of the Israeli regime in Rome and at the talks, and the publicizing of this fact, is a sign of weakness for both Israel and the United States, as it shows Washington is hand-

ing over the reins to Tel Aviv at this juncture. It also underscores Israel's desperation, as it rushes into Rome in such a flustered manner. Given Israel's current vulnerability, the Americans would do well to seize the

moment; if they are genuinely intent on a breakthrough, they must start making independent decisions.

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Take the deal, President Trump

By Ron Paul
Former Republican congressman

OPINION

Deal-making is said to be President Trump's specialty, yet after five rounds of indirect talks with Iran — most recently just days ago — we seem as far away from an agreement as ever. The fifth round ended last Friday with no breakthrough, but at least no breakdown. However, each day that passes without a document signed on the table is another day for the neocons to maneuver the US president toward an attack on Iran. One way the war party does this is to continuously move the goalposts and change the rules of the game. Trump envoy Steve Witkoff, under great pressure from the neocons, has himself signaled at least three position shifts: from no enrichment at all, to low-level enrichment for civilian uses, back to no enrichment at all. The neocons know that Iran will not give up its right to the civilian use of nuclear power and that is why they are applying maximum pressure to force Trump to officially adopt that position. They know if that becomes the US "red

line," then they will win and they will get their war. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, in league with US neocons, has been warning us for 20 years that Iran is "months away" from a nuclear weapon — even though our own Intelligence Community recently reaffirmed that Iran is not working on a nuclear weapon at all.

Of course, this is the same Netanyahu who promised Congress in 2002 that if the US would just invade Iraq, peace and prosperity would break out in the Middle East. "If you take out Saddam, Saddam's regime," he told Congress in March of that year, "I guarantee you that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region."

We know how that worked out. Poll after poll shows that the American people are tired of intervention and tired of Middle East wars. President Trump himself recognized this in his scathing rebuke of neocons and interventionists during a recent speech in Saudi Arabia. But rebuke in a speech is not enough. President Trump must

actively turn away from the neocons — many of whom are prominent in his own administration. The recent US debacle in Yemen — where billions were wasted, civilians killed, and US military equipment destroyed — is just a taste of what the US would be in for if the neocons get their way and take us to war with Iran. The Iranian foreign minister laid down in the simplest terms how the impasse could be solved, posting on X that, "Zero nuclear weapons = we DO have a deal; Zero enrichment = we do NOT have a deal." My own preference is non-intervention and I do not believe Iran has the desire to militarily harm the United States. I share President Trump's view that it would be far better to re-establish relations with Iran and begin mutually beneficial trade with the country. But if a mutually acceptable nuclear deal is the best way to take the neocon war with Iran off the table, then a deal is worth supporting. President Trump should make his position clear to his negotiators: no more waffling or contradictions, get this agreement signed, and put one in the "win" column.

The article first appeared on The Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity.



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