

Tehran-E3 talks to focus on sanctions removal, nuclear program: *Baqaei*

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) speaks at a meeting with provincial governors in Tehran, July 21, 2025.
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Iran's talks with Europe on terrain of distrust

ANALYSIS

Britain, France and Germany—the so-called European Troika—have raised the prospect of reinstating UN Security Council sanctions against Iran, amid a fragile truce that came into force in the wake of an Israeli-US aggression on the Islamic Republic last month Iran, Israel and the United States. Yet, doubts linger over how effective such a move by the European trio could truly be. It has been nearly a month since strikes by Israel and the US targeted Iranian territory—an interval best described as a “diplomatic coma” in Iran’s relations with the West. It is a situation where one can neither speak of the death of diplomacy nor of its active presence and influence in the international arena. However, a video call between the foreign ministers of the Troika plus the European Union’s foreign policy chief with Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi marks a crucial signal. If both sides proceed cautiously, there remains a path out of this crisis and the diplomatic paralysis it has induced. According to Western media, the senior European diplomats urged Iran to achieve “tangible progress towards reviving the nuclear deal by the end of summer” and warned that failure to do so will leave them “prepared to trigger the snapback mechanism and swiftly restore UN Security Council sanctions.”

Iran’s foreign minister hit back that the US—not Iran—had effectively brought the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, “to its deathbed”: first by unilaterally walking out of the agreement, and later by launching military strikes in the midst of diplomacy. Any future deal, he insisted, must be “fair, balanced and grounded in mutual benefit,” with Iran open to talks only if its interests are recognized. He dismissed threats and pressure, calling snapback “an outdated tool” with neither moral nor legal standing—unlikely, he warned, to deliver European goals.

Unverified reports now suggest that Europe may have proposed postponing the snapback of sanctions, limiting Iranian enriched uranium, and arranging a new round of talks between senior diplomats from Iran and Europe. Whether any of these will materialize remains to be seen in the coming days.

Its and buts of snapback

UN Security Council Resolution 2231, the legal backbone of the JCPOA, allows a unilateral path for reinstating pre-deal UN sanctions against Iran—unbound by the usual requirement for unanimity. While Iran first invoked this mechanism due to unmet JCPOA commitments by other parties, the European Troika’s political reversal—aimed at reimposing sanctions—lacks comparable legal basis. After all, Iran remained the most compliant party, even as its nuclear facilities were bombed during diplomatic talks with the US over the past months.

The US first tested the reimposition of sanctions in 2020, but efforts faltered without broader support from other parties to the JCPOA due to Washington’s departure from the deal. Now, with Europe pushing forward in a U-turn, activation of the mechanism risks undermining multilateral frameworks and stifling nuclear diplomacy with Iran.

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