

Diplomatic path spells win-win for Europe, Tehran: *Expert*

INTERVIEW

The recent joint video conference between the foreign ministers of the three European countries (E3) and the EU's high representative for foreign affairs with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi marks the latest significant development in relations between Iran and the European Union. According to media reports detailing this virtual meeting, the foreign ministers of France, Germany, and the UK, along with the European foreign policy chief, claimed that Iran has until late August this year to hammer out an agreement to prevent the activation of the snapback mechanism. They underscored their determination to reinstate UN sanctions if Tehran fails to make headway on the nuclear deal.

Iran's foreign minister, in turn, stressed that any new round of negotiations would only be possible if the other side was ready for a fair, balanced, and mutually beneficial nuclear agreement. He pointed out that if the European Union and the E3 countries wish to play a role, they must behave responsibly and break away from the outworn policy of threats and pressure, including threatening to trigger the snapback mechanism, which they lack any moral or legal basis for.

Based on analyses and speculation surrounding these discussions, it appears the European troika has carved out a two-month window for coming to terms on a diplomatic version. However, the extent to which they will adhere to their claim to achieve a diplomatic formula, and the regional and global repercussions of any failure to adhere, are questions that were put to Morteza Maki, an international relations and European affairs analyst.

The foreign ministers of the three European countries and the continent's foreign policy chief recently held talks with Iran's foreign minister and announced that an agreement on Iran's nuclear activities must be reached by September, less than two months from now. The question is: What objectives is Europe pursuing by escalating tensions with Tehran?

MAKI: In recent years, we have seen strained relations between Iran and Europe. Russia's attack on Ukraine, the Gaza war, and Iran's internal developments in 2022 were a series of events and developments that profoundly influenced Iran's relations with Europe, giving rise to very challenging ties. Even Europe, which always sought to play a mediating role in US-Iran nuclear issues and prevented the passage of resolutions against Iran at the UN Security Council twice during the first Trump administration, at this stage threw its weight behind the Israeli and American aggression against Iran. They even refused to issue a statement against the attack on Iranian nuclear facilities at the International Atomic Energy Agency. This showed that Europe has virtually sided with the US and Israel in their aggression and hostile policies against Iran.

The virtual meeting held between FM Araghchi and senior European diplomats, and the two-month window they proposed for resolving the dispute, indicates that they are concerned about escalating tensions with Iran and that Tehran's reaction could upend many equations and calculations. This two-month window could provide a breathing space for both Iran and Europe to come up with a middle ground solution for reaching an agreement on Iran's nuclear programs.

During this period, as numerous and contradictory reports circulated in political and media circles regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's activities and nuclear program, a conversation with former US secretary of state Antony Blinken also came to light, in which he claimed that Iranians were willing to accept enrichment below one percent and reached a compromise with the Europeans, but the Israeli and subsequent American attack on Iran pushed this issue to the sidelines. If this is true (no one has yet confirmed or denied it), it shows that Iran has demonstrated maximum flexibility in reaching a deal.

The extension of time to prevent the automatic return of sanctions, known as "snapback," and the extension of UN Resolution 2231 are scenarios that have been mooted in recent days. We must make the most of these opportunities to prevent the ac-



From left, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz, France's President Emmanuel Macron, and Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer talk to the press after their meeting in Tirana, Albania, on May 16, 2025.

● LEON NEAL/POOL



Europe and the US are now in a different situation compared to recent months, especially concerning the Ukraine war. Just as the US president finally accepted that Ukraine and Europe should play a role in reaching any practical agreement with Russia, it seems the Americans have given implicit approval regarding Iran-Europe negotiations, and the meeting of Iranian and European diplomats in Istanbul in the coming days has become fixed.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (c) speaks to the media after his meeting with the E3 group of European ministers in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 20, 2025.

● SEDAT SUNA/GETTY IMAGES

tivation of the snapback as this activation will bring about political costs and destabilize conditions for Iran, the region, and the world.

We must hope for and help bring about an agreement between Iran and Europe within these two months. It appears that Donald Trump and the US have not so far taken a negative view of Europe's role in this regard. Europe and the US are now in a different situation compared to recent months, especially concerning the Ukraine war. Just as the US president finally accepted that Ukraine and Europe should

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It has now been announced that Europe has proposed extending Resolution 2231, which would mean refraining from automatically re-imposing sanctions. Will Iran accept this proposal, and if so, what concessions and consequences will it entail?

Currently, Iran is facing extremely difficult political, economic, security, and diplomatic conditions. Although it managed to inflict significant blows on the Zionist regime in the imposed 12-day war, it also suffered considerable damage. Any path opened for diplomacy should be welcomed, regardless of whether it leads to an agreement or not, and what scenarios exist in this regard; Diplomacy must be supported. The Islamic Republic of Iran is indeed striving to use every avenue for political opening and to prevent a political deadlock.

This issue is beneficial for both

Iran and Europe because if a political deadlock triggers the snapback, both Iran and the West will suffer very serious losses, and a situation of unpredictability and instability will emerge in the region. For example, the attacks carried out by the Zionist regime against Syria's territorial integrity in recent days, and the state of uncertainty and vacuum created in that country, show how much the absence of a diplomatic solution can be considered a major political, economic, and security earthquake for all countries in the region.

It seems that if the Europeans have agreed to set aside a two-month window to find a way to achieve a political agreement with Iran, it stems from issues on the field and insecurities existing in the region. All these factors could serve as motives for Europe to understand how threatening insecurity can be for those adjacent to the Middle East. Europe remembers the developments of 2015 and 2016 when a flood of migrants poured into European borders, confronting the continent with a difficult situation, and this could recur. If insecurity spreads in Syria and other countries in the region, its consequences will be far more widespread than the crisis of those years for Europe.

The Iranian foreign minister, in his discussion with the Europeans, made the start of negotiations contingent on the other side's readiness for a fair, balanced, and mutually beneficial agreement. In your

