

opinion, what characteristics should a fair agreement possess, considering our current situation?

No agreement should diminish Iran's deterrent power as Iran seeks nothing beyond the NPT, and Iran's missile capability serves the country's security against aggression. The 12-day war of aggression clearly demonstrated the importance of this missile capability in defending national security and territorial integrity. One of Iran's demands in any negotiation and agreement in this regard will be that this deterrent capability is not reduced.

On the other hand, the Islamic Republic of Iran aims to strip the US and the Zionist regime of the Iranophobia lever they have held onto in the region for decades, and which they attempted to use to securitize Iran's nuclear file at the regional level, portraying Tehran as a threat to its neighbors. The Israeli regime and the US justified actions and operations against Iran within the framework of this lever and Iranophobia, and the only way to neutralize this lever and scenario is through diplomacy. This diplomacy must lean on national cohesion, unity, and defensive and

military capabilities. These are essential for Iranian diplomats to sit with confidence at the negotiating table and work in synergy. Iran has shown maximum flexibility to allow the Europeans to verify Iran's nuclear activities. If the West is genuinely concerned about enrichment in Iran, their wishes will be fulfilled through such targeted proposals. However, if not, Iran will continue to resist their threats. Nevertheless, to prevent any conflict and tension, the door to diplomacy must be kept open. The "no war, no peace" situation has been very difficult for Iran and will make

governing the country challenging, and we must move past this stage. Iran-Europe relations and engagement in the next two months will be very sensitive and could bring about breakthroughs.

Can negotiations with Europe be seen as a bridge for negotiations with the US, or should these two be viewed separately?

Currently, and unfortunately, Iran has become a bridge for alignment and convergence between the US, Israel, and Europe. Even though the US and Europe have deep disagreements on political, economic, and security issues,

which have not reached this level in the past 80 years and relations have not been this challenging, they have found a kind of convergence on Iran. Iran-Europe talks can help Europe act with more caution or considerations regarding Iran in its alignment with the US and Israel. These talks can certainly contribute to alleviating tensions with the Americans as well.

The US concluded concerning Ukraine that they cannot resolve the war without Europe's cooperation. It appears that after the 12-day attacks on Iran, Washington has once again come to the

conclusion that Europeans, compared to other regional mediators like Arab countries, Oman, and Qatar, or China and Russia, can be more helpful in reaching a deal with Iran. Although the European troika and Iran currently have very strained relations and there is hostile rhetoric, against this pressure diplomacy, public and media diplomacy can certainly offer an opportunity for the Islamic Republic of Iran to emerge from these difficult political and economic conditions.

The interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

What West misunderstands about Iran

By Emad Khatami  
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OPINION

When Iranian officials were preparing for the sixth round of negotiations with their US counterparts over the country's nuclear program, Israel launched a surprise military strike. Rather than condemning the attack, the United States and Europe stood by — or even applauded. The German Chancellor framed it as "the dirty work Israel is doing for all of us". This moment only reinforced what Iranian leaders have long believed: that the world demands their surrender — and leaves them alone, at constant risk of betrayal and invasion. Unless the West begins to understand Iranian history — and the mindset it has created among Iranian leaders — it will continue to misread Tehran's actions. What often looks like aggression or stubbornness from the outside is, in the minds of Iranian decision-makers, an act of defense grounded in deep national memory. For centuries, Iran has lived under the shadow of invasion, betrayal, and isolation. And every chapter of its modern history has only reinforced the same conclusion for its leaders: No matter who sits at Iran's end of the negotiating table — be it a reformist, a moderate, or a hardliner — Iran must rely only on itself. It's not a question of paranoia. It's a survival instinct. This sense of siege didn't begin in 2025 with the Israeli attacks, or even in 1980 with Saddam's invasion. Iran has been shaped by trauma stretching back over a thousand years: Alexander the Great's conquest of Persia in the 4th century BC, the Arab conquest in the 7th century, the Mongol invasions in the 13th century, and repeated Turkic and Central Asian assaults. In more recent centuries, it lost territory in the Russo-Persian wars and was occupied by Allied forces in both world wars, even though it had declared neutrality in both. Again and again, Iran has faced foreign troops on its soil. And each time, no one came to help. That deep historical scar tissue explains the decisions of Iranian leaders more than any speech ever could. It's why they see military self-reliance not as aggression, but as insurance. It's why they view diplomacy with suspicion, and why even moderates in Tehran are hesitant to trust Western intentions. In the contemporary era, there have been at least four major betrayals by the United States that continue to underscore Iran's fear of foreign duplicity. First, the 1953 coup against



A woman passes by an anti-American mural painted on the walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran, Iran, on August 16, 2023. ABEDIN TAHERKENAREH/EPA

prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh, backed by the CIA and MI6. Mossadegh was democratically elected and sought to engage with the United States as a counterbalance to British colonial influence. The US responded by orchestrating his overthrow, primarily to protect British oil interests. Second, after the 9/11 attacks, Iran secretly assisted the United States in its campaign against the Taliban — providing intelligence, cooperating with anti-Taliban forces, and supporting the post-war settlement in Afghanistan. Just weeks later, it was branded part of president George W. Bush's "Axis of Evil". The third betrayal involves the 2015 nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran agreed to the strictest nuclear inspections regime in history. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed its compliance 15 times between 2016 and 2018. Yet in 2018, President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew

from the deal and reimposed crippling sanctions, more severe than those that existed before the agreement. Fourth, the most recent and perhaps most consequential betrayal came in June 2025. After five rounds of talks between Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff — mediated by Oman — a sixth round was scheduled. Both sides held firm positions but remained at the table. Iran sought recognition of its right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. The US ultimately demanded zero enrichment on Iranian soil. Despite the impasse, cautious progress was being made, based on comments from both sides after each round of talks. Then, on the morning of June 13, 2025 — just two days before the next round — Israeli forces launched an unprecedented assault on Iran, striking nuclear sites and killing civilians. Senior scientists and military commanders were among the casualties. These weren't symbolic

warning shots. They were hard, coordinated blows, timed to derail diplomacy. But Israel didn't act alone. While the initial Israeli attack was unilateral, American strikes soon followed. US stealth bombers dropped 30,000-pound bunker-buster bombs on Fordow and Natanz. Days earlier, President Trump called for Iran's "unconditional surrender". After the strikes, he publicly praised the operation, declared it a success, and warned that Iran "should make peace or face more attacks," adding that "there are many targets left" if Iran refused to relinquish key parts of its nuclear program. In Tehran, it's not irrational to believe that US diplomatic engagement was never intended to succeed. The negotiations had been real, but the intentions behind them now look suspect. For Iranian leaders, the lesson seemed unmistakable: The West may speak the language of dialogue, but it acts in the language of force and violence.

So, what should the West expect now? It doesn't matter who rules Iran. The leadership — regardless of name or face, whether wearing a crown, a turban, or a tie — shares a foundational belief: The West cannot be trusted to keep its word, honor its deals, or respect Iranian sovereignty. This mindset long predates the Islamic Republic. Both Reza Shah and his son Mohammad Reza Shah — who came to power with at least the tacit support of Western powers — remained deeply skeptical of foreign governments and consistently questioned their intentions. That posture didn't end with the 1979 revolution; It was only reinforced and has gained broader consensus across the political spectrum. This doesn't mean Iran is inflexible or incapable of negotiation. But its starting point is not trust, it's caution. That caution has only deepened over time, especially as the West repeatedly turns to what it calls "alternatives" to diplomacy. Each time that happens, those inside Iran who oppose negotiations gain the upper hand. This mindset may frustrate Western diplomats. But ignoring it leads to policies doomed to fail. If the West wants a different outcome with Iran, it must stop pretending it's engaging with a blank slate. History walks into every room before a single word is spoken. And for Iran, history keeps saying the same thing: You are alone, so act accordingly. Until that narrative is disrupted — not with air strikes, but with sustained, credible commitments — Iran's leaders will continue to do exactly what history taught them to do: resist.



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The Iranian flag hangs from a building in Tehran following damage by Israeli air strikes on June 25, 2025. ABEDIN TAHERKENAREH/EPA

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