

Is a Nuclear Deal with Iran Possible? An Analytical Framework for the Negotiations

by [Michael Singh \(/experts/michael-singh\)](/experts/michael-singh)

Dec 30, 2012

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Michael Singh \(/experts/michael-singh\)](/experts/michael-singh)

Michael Singh is the Lane-Swig Senior Fellow and managing director at The Washington Institute.



Articles & Testimony

An in-depth look at how the United States can use pressure and inducements to convince Iran's leaders that negotiating a nuclear deal is their best option.

The full version of this article is available [on the International Security website](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/ISEC_a_00108) (http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/ISEC_a_00108).

Varied diplomatic approaches by multiple negotiators over the past several years have failed to conclude a nuclear deal with Iran. Mutual hostility, misperception, and flawed diplomacy may be responsible. Yet, more fundamentally, no mutually acceptable deal may exist. To assess this possibility, a "negotiation analytic" framework conceptually disentangles two issues: (1) whether a feasible deal exists; and (2) how to design the most promising process to achieve one. Focusing on whether a "zone of possible agreement" exists, a graphical negotiation analysis precisely relates input assumptions about the parties' interests, their no-deal options, and possible deals.

Under a plausible, mainstream set of such assumptions, the Iranian regime's no-deal options, at least through the fall of 2012, appear superior to potential nuclear agreements. If so, purely tactical and process-oriented initiatives will fail. Opening space for a mutually acceptable nuclear deal -- one that avoids both military conflict and a nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable Iran -- requires relentlessly and creatively worsening Iran's no-deal options while enhancing the value of a deal to the Iranian regime. Downplaying both coercive options and upside potential, as international negotiators have often done, works against this integrated strategy. If this approach opens a zone of possible agreement, sophisticated negotiation will be key to reaching a worthwhile agreement...

[Read the subsequent debate about this article in the Summer 2013 issue of International Security.](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/ISEC_c_00130)

http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/ISEC_c_00130 ❖

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy](#)

Feb 14, 2022



Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Libya's Renewed Legitimacy Crisis](#)

Feb 14, 2022



Ben Fishman

[\(/policy-analysis/libyas-renewed-legitimacy-crisis\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[The UAE Formally Ceases to be a Tax-Free Haven](#)

Feb 14, 2022



Sana Quadri,
Hamdullah Baycar

[\(/policy-analysis/uae-formally-ceases-be-tax-free-haven\)](#)

TOPICS

Proliferation (/policy-analysis/proliferation)

U.S. Policy (/policy-analysis/us-policy)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Iran (/policy-analysis/iran)