

# SAVE THE DEAL: ON U.S. AND IRAN RESOLVING NUCLEAR CRISIS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The Vienna talks between the [remaining members of the Iran nuclear deal](#) — China, Russia, the U.K., France, Germany and Iran — have raised hopes for the revival of the agreement from which then President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. in May 2018. After the initial round of talks, European and Iranian diplomats have said efforts to revive the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#), as the deal is officially called, are on “the right track”. An American delegation, led by Robert Malley, the White House special envoy for Iran, is also in Vienna, though the Americans and the Iranians would not hold direct talks. All sides agree that bringing the deal back on track is ideal, but who will blink first? The U.S. wants Iran to end its uranium enrichment and centrifuge development programmes and return to the 2015 agreement, while Tehran has demanded the U.S. lift all sanctions imposed by Mr. Trump and still enforced by President Joe Biden. The agenda at Vienna, therefore, is to produce a road map for the revival of the JCPOA by addressing these two critical issues — Iran’s nuclear enhanced programme and American sanctions.

The [Biden administration has displayed flexibility](#) in its approach towards Iran. The President appointed a special envoy, ended the U.S.’s support for Saudi Arabia’s war against the Houthis, Iran-backed militants, in Yemen and promised to lift sanctions if Tehran returns to the JCPOA terms. The administration has also reportedly made an offer to Iran to release \$1 billion of Iranian money frozen in South Korea as part of the sanctions in exchange for ending its 20% uranium enrichment. But a wary Iran, which was fully compliant with the agreement when Mr. Trump abandoned it and slapped back sanctions, has rejected the offer, seeking more concrete measures from the U.S. The challenge both sides are facing is a lack of time. Iran holds its presidential polls in June. If the U.S.’s best chance to address Iran’s nuclear programme is through the revival of the JCPOA, the best possibility of reviving the agreement is to do it (or at least agree on a road map) before the presidential election. There are external dangers as well. Iran-backed Shia militias in Iraq continue to target U.S. forces and bases in Iraq. The Israel-Iran shadow conflict is now being fought inside Syria and on the seas. Last week, an Iranian ship was attacked in the Red Sea. If security tensions rise in the region involving Iran and its proxies, it could derail the diplomatic efforts. The U.S. and Iran should exercise restraint, stay focused on talks and rebuild the lost trust, and take measures to get the deal back on track that would resolve the nuclear crisis in return for dismantling the sanctions regime.

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