

# Background

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## Forging a Common Transatlantic Approach to the Iranian Nuclear Problem

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During his recent successful trip to Europe, President George W. Bush stated that the European Union Three (EU-3), the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, which are negotiating with Iran to end its pursuit of nuclear weapons, shared this objective with Washington. National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley went even further, saying that the President and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder discussed whether there should be “a mix of carrots and sticks, and who should the carrots come from and what should they be,”<sup>1</sup> regarding the looming Iranian crisis. At an appearance at Centenary College of Louisiana, President Bush further stated, “I look forward to working with our European friends to make it abundantly clear to the Iranian regime that the free world will not tolerate them having nuclear weapons.”<sup>2</sup>

This effort to encourage closer coordination of a common transatlantic diplomatic position should be strongly welcomed, because Europe’s current negotiating position is bound to fail unless Europe agrees to meaningful disincentives to Iran’s efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Absent major disincentives, it is doubtful that the Europeans could offer Tehran any inducements strong enough to offset the lure of nuclear weapons. Instead, Iran will be able to continue its nuclear weapons program unimpeded and to realize its ambition of establishing dominance over the oil-rich Persian Gulf.

Iran’s on-again, off-again commitment to a diplomatic solution to ending its nuclear activities is motivated more by its fear of American military action than by its

### Talking Points

- A comprehensive Euro–American plan—with the U.S. actively offering carrots for a successful outcome while the Europeans pledge to threaten Iran with genuine sticks if the talks fail—would illustrate transatlantic cooperation at its best.
- It also increases the chances for genuine diplomatic success rather than yet again attempting a grand bargain of trying to settle all outstanding issues with the recalcitrant mullahs.
- Such a plan would cut the Gordian knot by focusing, first and foremost, on the pressing Iranian nuclear question.
- If the Iranians reject a reasonable overture from the EU-3 and the United States, at least the transatlantic alliance need not become an indirect casualty of the crisis.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
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desire to pocket European economic carrots. High world oil prices have bolstered Iran's faltering economy, allowed it to pay down its national debt, and reduced the perceived urgency of garnering foreign trade concessions and foreign investment.

A common Euro–American position—a good-faith offer made to the Iranians, complete with ironclad commitments for European sanctions and diplomatic support for U.N. sanctions if Tehran fails to accept the deal or later reneges on it—would box the Europeans into taking tougher action against Iran if the negotiations fail to resolve the problem.

However, in crafting a common Euro–American strategy for halting Iran's nuclear program, the Bush Administration must be careful to avoid being boxed in on other important issues. Specifically, it should reject any proposed deal that does not:

- **Keep the military option on the table if Iran balks at signing an agreement or violates it.**
- **Permit the United States to give political support to the democratic opposition inside Iran.** The Bush Administration has correctly put itself on the side of the Iranian people against a repressive government. This should not change.
- **Make it harder for Iran to build nuclear weapons if it chooses to violate the agreement.** Any agreement should make it more difficult for Iran to use its civilian nuclear power program to further its nuclear weapons program, as North Korea did under the 1994 Agreed Framework signed during the Clinton Administration.<sup>3</sup>

### Outline of a Transatlantic Concord

The sequencing must be that Iran agrees to terminate—permanently and verifiably—its pursuit

of nuclear weapons and a full nuclear fuel cycle. Only if this occurs will joint incentives be given to Tehran. Specifically, Iran must:

- Ratify and strictly adhere to the Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguard agreement, which provides for a broader nuclear inspection regime;
- Commit itself to transparency and full cooperation with the IAEA to resolve all remaining issues;
- Terminate permanently its pursuit of a full nuclear fuel cycle (including all programs to enrich uranium and produce uranium hexafluoride and its precursors), as well as all programs to extract plutonium and acquire a heavy-water reactor;
- Agree to an intrusive inspections regime that utilizes real-time monitoring equipment at the Bushehr reactor, the associated spent fuel storage pond, and any other suspected nuclear installations; and
- Provide economic justification for its specific nuclear power programs.

It should be made clear that any final agreement must occur within a reasonable time limit so that the Iranians cannot stall and attempt to split the common Western diplomatic initiative or buy time for the clandestine building of a nuclear weapon.

Only if Iran first agrees to these outcomes will a discussion of carrots with the West prove possible. Iran's full compliance with these provisions would trigger:

1. Commencement of U.S.–Iranian bilateral negotiations on resuming diplomatic relations;

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1. Elisabeth Bumiller, "Bush in Europe: Meeting in Germany; Bush May Weigh Using Incentives to Dissuade Iran," *The New York Times*, February 24, 2005, p. A1.

2. George W. Bush, "President Discusses Strengthening Social Security in Louisiana," White House transcript of speech at Centenary College of Louisiana, Shreveport, Louisiana, March 11, 2005, at [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050311-13.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/03/20050311-13.html) (March 14, 2005).

3. See James Phillips and Baker Spring, "Iran's Latest Nuclear Charade," Heritage Foundation *Executive Memorandum* No. 951, November 24, 2004, at [www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/em951.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/em951.cfm).

2. Commencement of bilateral negotiations on resuming U.S.–Iranian trade relations;
3. U.S. and EU–3 support for Iran’s accession to the World Trade Organization, assuming that Tehran meets the normal conditions of membership;
4. Resumption of negotiations between the EU–3 and Iran on an EU–Iran trade and cooperation agreement;
5. A decision by the U.S. and the EU–3 not to block Iran’s acquisition of a single light-water nuclear reactor (Bushehr); and
6. Support of the U.S. and the EU–3 in providing Iran with access to the international fuel market at market prices, consistent with comparable G–8/Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) assurances, with all spent fuel being returned and being reprocessed outside of Iran.

Furthermore, Iran and the other parties to this agreement should agree to a package of security guarantees that will ensue after Iran’s formal and verifiable renunciation of all nuclear armament.

### The Non-Nuclear Agenda

There should also be a parallel discussion of major outstanding issues with Iran, which the EU–3 could host. These issues include:

1. Iranian support for terrorism, especially Iran’s funding of Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and provision of sanctuary to al-Qaeda;
2. Establishment of stable, representative, and democratic governments in Iraq and Afghanistan;
3. The Arab–Israeli peace process;
4. Iran’s ballistic missile buildup;
5. Reaffirmation of freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf and the development of protocols to avoid incidents at sea between Iranian naval vessels and other naval vessels in the crowded waters of the Persian Gulf;
6. Discussion of Iran’s legitimate security concerns;
7. Discussion of Iran’s economic concerns, particularly regarding resumption of U.S. foreign direct investment in Iran; and
8. Discussion of human rights.

Even if Iran signs and complies with a nuclear agreement, substantial tension will continue to mar Iranian–American relations unless considerable progress is made in negotiating common understandings on these issues.

### A United Front If Negotiations Fail

In the run-up to the Iraq War, Secretary of State Colin Powell reportedly believed that he had reached an understanding with France on a common Western position on the use of force to enforce U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq. However, after bending over backwards to push through yet another Security Council resolution, Washington subsequently discovered that Paris had no intention of supporting military action against Iraq.

There must be no such misunderstanding with respect to Iran’s nuclear program. Instead, there must be a clear understanding about what Iran must do (and must not do) as well as certainty that Iran’s failure to comply with the outstanding nuclear provisions listed above will trigger the following actions:

- The U.S. and the EU–3 will support the referral of the Iranian nuclear issue to the U.N. Security Council;
- The EU–3 will immediately adopt a policy of comprehensive sanctions against Iran and make maximal efforts to press the EU to follow suit; and
- The U.S. will reserve in writing its right to act in a manner appropriate to the situation.

### Conclusion

This comprehensive plan illustrates transatlantic cooperation at its best, with the U.S. actively offering carrots for a successful outcome while the Europeans pledge to threaten Iran with genuine sticks if the talks fail. It also increases the chances for genu-

ine diplomatic success rather than yet again attempting a grand bargain of trying to settle all outstanding issues with the recalcitrant mullahs.

Such a plan cuts the Gordian knot by focusing, first and foremost, on the pressing nuclear question. If the Iranians reject such a reasonable overture, at least the transatlantic alliance need not become an indirect casualty of the crisis. The Europeans will be solidly behind the United States in the looming crisis with Iranian obstinacy instead of American “unilateralism” dominating world headlines.

This plan offers the last, best chance to head off a Cuban missile–style crisis. It is vital that on this primary security matter, the U.S. and the EU–3 come to some form of genuine coordinated agreement. The Bush Administration should be applauded for attempting just such an effort.

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