



IPS INSIGHTS

Perspectives On the Issues Shaping Policy

MoU or Enigma: The Endgame of Iran-US Peace Negotiations

Said Nazir¹

The Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by Iran and US Presidents and the Prime Minister of Pakistan in their respective offices contrary to earlier decided venue (Switzerland) in a formal way. The damper on the ceremony came mainly from violation of ceasefire by Israel bombing Lebanon and partly due to domestic concerns of the respective countries. However, the Islamabad MoU is now a historic document, a framework for further negotiation; it is being interpreted by respective parties and analyst from different perspectives and viewpoints, but the devil lies in details.

The sticking issues of the opening of the Strait of Hormuz and ending military operations on all fronts, including Lebanon, and maintaining of status-quo are immediate peace and relief-oriented goals. Regarding this, spoilers like Israel, India, and hardliners and lobbies, will be deterred by result-oriented dialogue and robust implementation mechanism. For this, the taming of Israel and binding to the ceasefire on Lebanon-front is the responsibility of America through application of requisite tools.

Strategic Restraint and the Search for Negotiations

Despite continued hostilities, the two sides sought periods of strategic restraint through mediated negotiations. Initially, each side tested nerves of the other, through parallel military and diplomatic measures, to hold maximum leverage during negotiations. Despite competing demands, the whole process aimed at preventing further escalation while exploring a pathway towards

a negotiated settlement. This pathway has been offered in the shape of Islamabad MoU that serves as a historical document in the US-Iran relationship in decades.

Confidence-Building Measures and Military Drawdown

One of the central themes of the proposed framework is the gradual reduction of military tensions. The phased withdrawal or repositioning of forces deployed around Iran is intended to reduce perceptions of imminent threat and create an environment more conducive to dialogue. Such measures would likely be implemented progressively and accompanied by verification mechanisms designed to reassure both parties of compliance.

The Sixty-Day Negotiation Framework

A defined negotiation period of approximately sixty days has been proposed in order to avoid indefinite discussions and strategic uncertainty. The inclusion of a clear timeline serves as a sunset clause, encouraging seriousness and urgency while preventing the process from becoming open-ended. Technical teams would work simultaneously on implementation details, interpretation of provisions, and the resolution of disputes.

Sanctions, Frozen Assets, and Economic Recovery

Economic issues remain among the most sensitive elements of the negotiations. Discussions focus on sanctions relief, the release of frozen assets, and mechanisms for economic recovery. Any easing of sanctions

¹ Retired Brigadier and Security Analyst

would likely be phased and linked to agreed benchmarks. Similarly, the release of financial assets would require mutually accepted safeguards regarding their use and oversight. These measures are viewed as essential for easing economic pressures and encouraging long-term stability.

The Strait of Hormuz and Maritime Security

The future status of the Strait of Hormuz remains a critical issue. Ensuring freedom of navigation, maintaining uninterrupted trade routes, and preventing additional economic burdens on global supply chains are central concerns. Any arrangement affecting maritime traffic must balance regional security interests with international commercial requirements and the broader stability of global markets.

Maintaining the Status Quo during Negotiations

Another important principle is the preservation of the status quo while negotiations continue. This would involve avoiding further escalation, refraining from new military initiatives, and maintaining existing positions until a comprehensive settlement is reached. Such an approach seeks to prevent developments on the ground from undermining diplomatic progress.

Regional Challenges: Lebanon, Gaza, and Palestine

Even if progress is achieved between the United States and Iran, broader regional issues will remain unresolved. Developments in Lebanon, continued instability in Gaza, and the enduring Palestinian question continue to influence regional dynamics. Sustainable peace ultimately requires addressing underlying political disputes, humanitarian concerns, and long-standing questions regarding security, sovereignty, and coexistence.

The Role of Mediation and Regional Diplomacy

The negotiation process highlights the importance of mediation, confidence-building measures, and sustained diplomatic engagement. Regional and international

actors can play a constructive role by facilitating dialogue, addressing points of disagreement, and helping transform temporary understandings into durable agreements. The success of any settlement will depend not only on the text of agreements but also on the willingness of all parties to implement them in good faith.

The Nuclear Issue

It appears that the enriched uranium issue will be solved in the spirit of the early dialogue between Iran and US under the overall mandate of IAEA. The verification, stockpiling and status be verified by the Agency and its deposition and disposal be done in Iran by diluting it below 3.6 percent. Iran may not agree to hand it over to the third country due the fear of its total surrender. There may some limits on the number of the 3rd generation fast centrifuge and closure of some nuclear facilities. A robust and strict oversight and monitoring mechanism would be put in place, as the enrichment issue is pivotal in the security paradigm of the US, Israel and some regional countries. The total surrender on the uranium enrichment is being ensured to be imposed on Iran.

Conclusion

The current phase of the conflict represents a decisive moment. Whether it leads to renewed confrontation or a durable peace will depend on the ability of all sides to move beyond military calculations and embrace pragmatic diplomacy. The path ahead remains difficult, requiring trust-building, verification, political courage, and sustained engagement. Nevertheless, the opportunity for de-escalation and regional stability remains within reach if negotiations are pursued with sincerity and determination. The role played by Pakistan in bringing the belligerents of 47 years to the negotiating table and signing of a mutually agreed MoU is worth recognition and appreciation. The consistent, persuasive and purpose oriented conventional and military diplomacy led by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Sayed Asim Munir made the impossible into a reality. The region and the world at large is indebted to Pakistan in gratitude. Pakistan is not only a peace loving nation but a peace maker too.