

White House and Congress reach deal over Iran nuclear talks

Thomas Gaist
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In a unanimous vote, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved a bipartisan bill removing several obstacles to reaching a nuclear deal with Iran by the June 30 deadline set by the Obama administration.

The Obama administration signaled approval Tuesday for legislation, produced during intensive negotiations between Republican and Democratic lawmakers held in close conjunction with the White House.

Under the procedure set down in the bill, Congress would take no action that might interfere with the ongoing negotiations, which are based on the framework agreement between Iran and the so-called P6 countries, the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany, on April 2.

If a final agreement is reached by June 30, or a few days thereafter, the Obama administration would move to lift US economic sanctions on Iran, and Congress would have 30 days to vote on a resolution to disapprove that action. Obama could veto that resolution, and Congress will not vote on the overall agreement with Iran.

The sections of the corporate media aligned with the Republican Congress and the White House respectively criticized their own side in the factional struggle within the US ruling elite, lamenting that they had given up too much ground to their rivals.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the deal gives Obama “nearly a free hand.” “Obama has maneuvered to make Congress irrelevant,” the *Journal* wrote, supposedly blocking congressional efforts to “reclaim a modest role in foreign affairs.” Obama has worked to transform the deal “into a one-man presidential compact with Iran,” the *Journal* wrote.

For its part, the *New York Times* worried in an editorial, “Congress has formally muscled its way into

President Obama’s negotiations with Iran, creating new and potentially dangerous uncertainties for an agreement that offers the best chance of restraining that country’s nuclear program.”

Congressional Republicans similarly sought to present the deal as if it were approved against the fervent wishes of the White House. “This was not something the administration favored, but Congress prevailed,” Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker claimed.

In reality, there is complete bipartisan support for the goal of crippling Iran’s nuclear program and, if possible, ousting the regime. Sections of both parties in Congress regard the White House maneuvers with Iran as risky, undermining US client states like Israel and the Gulf monarchies.

A hard-line faction will accept nothing less than war for regime change in Tehran, regardless of the cost. Republican Senator from Arkansas Tom Cotton called last week for “several days of air and naval bombing” against Iran’s nuclear and military facilities, “along the lines of what President Clinton did in December 1998 during Operation Desert Fox.”

While elements of Republican Party have advanced a deliberately provocative amendment demanding Iran “recognize Israel’s right to exist” as part of the nuclear deal, the unanimous vote of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is a clear sign that both Democrats and Republicans are prepared to accept a deal along the lines outlined by Obama.

From Obama’s standpoint, the belligerent rhetoric against Iran from Congress serves a useful purpose, allowing the White House to hold up the Republicans as a bogeyman and pose as the voice of moderation and restraint. In reality, the Obama administration is spearheading a reactionary militarist agenda that is

supported by the entire ruling class and threatens to produce a third world war.

Playing his part in this narrative, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani denounced "the extremists in the US" during a speech Wednesday, bolstering the pretense that the deal comes in defiance of the will of substantial right-wing sections of the US ruling elite and represents some sort of a victory for the Iranian people.

Rouhani's rhetoric is tailored to give the deal, which is in fact supported by the Iranian bourgeoisie in a desperate attempt to defend its own privileges, a superficial anti-imperialist flavoring.

The Iran deal is an important shift in US policy, and part of larger strategic agenda that includes the confrontation with Russia over Ukraine and the "pivot to Asia," directed against China. The US has maintained open hostility to Iran for nearly four decades. The sudden move to establish a modus vivendi with Tehran, executed in response to failed efforts to overthrow Assad, aims to shore up the position of US imperialism in the Middle East in preparation for much larger political and military struggles with China and Russia.

While there are differences between factions within the ruling elite over the best tactical approach, there is full agreement on the policy of transforming Iran into a semi-colonial instrument of US domination in the Middle East, in order to free up US forces and resources for redeployment against China in the East and Russia in the West.



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