**‘Sanctions or threats can’t take us to Geneva. We were there for a new approach. The world,the region needed this… Terror is a real threat’ | The Indian Express**

Related. At this Idea Exchange,Iranian Ambassador Gholamreza Ansari says Tehran achieved what it wanted to in the Geneva nuclear deal. Promising commitment to the pipeline project,the Ambassador adds that the only solution to terrorism is economic cooperation. The session was moderated by Assistant Editor Shubhajit Roy. Shubhajit Roy: On November 24,Iran signed a historic nuclear deal with six major world powers. What made Iran come to Geneva,and what is the future of the country? People are saying that Iran came to Geneva because of the sanctions and military threats. Let me go into the history of the issue and compare to 2003… Afghanistan had been attacked by the Americans. After Afghanistan,we were blamed. We received offers from Europeans saying they were ready for some settlement and we were told they would respect our rights according to the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty). In those days we just had 164 centrifuges and,sometimes,when we talked about yellowcake (uranium oxide),it was amazing for everybody that Iran was capable of it. It was very difficult for people to believe that. We respected the offers and came to some sort of negotiation. In the end we found that they are not respecting our rights… Now there is a completely new situation in the region. We have had an Islamic awakening,the Arab Spring. The kings are very shaky. From the economic point of view,the oil price is the highest in history <U+0097> around 100 dollars a barrel. We have high revenues from oil and now,even if we are facing sanctions,everyone knows our capabilities in aerospace,biotechnology and computer science… We have more than 9,000 centrifuges now. If you go into what we have signed in Geneva,you will understand the capabilities of Iran. We have had very successful elections. More than 73 per cent of the population took part in the elections,which were peaceful and accepted by everybody,whether friends of Iran or against it. (Hassan) Rouhani came to office with a completely new approach <U+0097> constructive,cooperative,confidence-building measures <U+0097> and this new approach took us to Geneva. It was not because of the American sanctions and military threats but because,comparing 2003 to 2013,we are in a completely new situation. Everyone knows what is going on in Afghanistan,Iraq,Lebanon,Egypt,Africa and Syria,all these countries surrounding Iran and the Middle East. Everybody tells us that military threat is quite constant. Sanctions are difficult but they are not elements which can take us to Geneva or took us there. We are there for a new and constructive approach and we think we have achieved what we wanted to achieve. Iran is not for the atomic bomb. I have the verdict of Ayatollah Khamenei and it was strong support to show that Iran is not in favour of the atomic bomb. In our religious approach,atomic bomb is completely haram. We are looking for technology,scientific capabilities and are not looking for the atomic bomb. We think that atomic bomb is not for the benefit of anybody. We were in Geneva for a new approach. This is something we and the world needed… When you go to all the stock markets in the world,you get to see that it was celebrated by everybody. Because it is a need of the international community and a desperate need of the region as well. Terrorism is a real threat everywhere. It began in Afghanistan and has spread out to Syria,North Africa,some African countries,Central Asia. So it<U+0092>s the right time to get involved in a very important country such as Iran with capabilities of finding a solution to all this mess created by foreigners and to countries which will benefit from instability… We are looking for stability and cooperation. We think we will be the first country to benefit from this sort of solution for peace. According to our capabilities,natural resources,manpower,very exclusive geographical situation in a peaceful region,we will be the first country to benefit and we want to share our assets with other countries. For example,India. We have quite complimentary economic relations. India needs energy,Iran is producing energy… Secondly,Iran can be the best access for countries in Central Asia and Afghanistan. India is very interested in using this passage. So these are two big elements which link us together,and if we have not been able to use these,it<U+0092>s just because of pressures on Indians,and sanctions. So Iran after sanctions can have the full potential for cooperation with the region… Iran can be a hub for energy and transportation. We can buy energy from this side and sell it to the other. We can be the hub for electricity for all neighbouring regions. So this is the projection for future which we are desperately looking for. We are looking for cooperation and institutionalising links through pipelines,railroads,roads and electricity links. This region contains 40 per cent of the natural resources of the world but just 10 per cent of its GDP. This is the root for instability. We should all help each other towards a better economy,which can be a very good base for security arrangements. The countries which think they can prevail in the region and create hegemonies, are ignorant. Rakesh Sinha: Why is Israel calling this accord a historic mistake? Historic mistake for them,yes. Because Israel <U+0097> we call them a Zionist regime <U+0097> relies on and needs American support and is very afraid of losing it. Americans have lost their reputation in the Middle East,Americans are blamed for what they have done in the Middle East… This is a costly price the Americans are paying for their approach in the Middle East. Dilip Bobb: This deal has been there for six months now. Is there scope for a permanent deal? I don<U+0092>t think so. When we came together,it was the most natural time. It was not because of the Iranian need and it was not just because of the American need. Both sides need to have a better region. The region is fed up with extremism and terrorism. Today is Syria<U+0092>s turn but nobody knows whose turn will be next. This is the main difficulty for the region and it can be addressed only when governments come together and take decisive measures like eradicating poverty,trying to develop the region economically. And this can be done just through cooperation… We are definitely committed to what we have signed for,but if they reject,that<U+0092>s their problem. It can be a big mistake. Muzamil Jaleel: The other country unhappy about the accord is Saudi Arabia. Is there a competition for influence between Iran and Saudi Arabia? Everybody has got a good lesson in Syria. They wanted to solve the Syrian issue in weeks,but it is more than 32 months now… Europeans who were supporting the opposition in Syria now understand the only solution should be political. This was what we were saying from the first day. All the difficulties in the region should be solved through negotiation and political ways. Definitely Saudi Arabia is a substantial country in the region. I think it is a misunderstanding that problems can be solved through military means. We must come together,sit and discuss and find solutions towards economic development. The history of the Islamic Republic (of Iran) shows that we are men of cooperation. We knew who was paying expenses to Saddam Hussein,and for the war against Iran. When Kuwait was attacked by Hussein,Iran was the first country to condemn the situation,and supported the resistance in Kuwait…Compared to Saudi Arabia,where people were fleeing. But revenge is not a solution… We hope in the future,we and the Saudi Arabians come together. Muzamil Jaleel: There is also talk that with Iran<U+0092>s influence increasing,it might create a Shia-Sunni divide again. We are pro-democracy not in Bahrain but in Syria as well. We said in Syria,in the beginning,that it<U+0092>s not American responsibility to say who should rule Syria. It is the people of Syria who are eligible to say who should rule them. The solution to the regime is democracy. Muslims,Christians,Jews <U+0097> one man,one vote. Anybody that comes out of these ballots,that<U+0092>s the regime that can rule. The people of the enemy nation don<U+0092>t have the right to intervene in other<U+0092>s affairs. But everybody took interest in Syria<U+0092>s affairs. The only country which will benefit from this is the Zionist regime. And the people who make the miscalculation. of supporting terrorism and who think they will benefit,they will lose. One day this cancer,terrorism,will go to their own homes… I<U+0092>m not saying there are no differences between Shias and Sunnis,there are disputes all over. Solving problems should not be through coercive action. Solving problems means through dialogue,and sitting,discussing,through political means. Amitav Ranjan: What is the status of the Iranian economy? We are not in a prosperous situation economically. (But) you cannot find a single regime where the system has been toppled because of sanctions,and we hope these pressures will be removed. But if aggression happens,if they refuse to fulfil their promises,I assure you,we have been able to live over 30 years in this world,we are a wealthy country. And anybody who has wealth has ways to solve their own problems. And don<U+0092>t forget,when we are talking about economic difficulties,it<U+0092>s not mainly because of the sanctions. It<U+0092>s because of the economic structure. We have been relying on oil. Maybe these sanctions give this sign to us,that we must correct this. Manu Pubby: What will be the impact of this deal on the pullout of American troops from Afghanistan? And on your relationship with Pakistan? In Afghanistan,we are facing a new approach,which is irreversible. Even ordinary people are thinking of a better life,better education. Iran and India can play a very crucial role to push this approach,especially on the economic front. It<U+0092>s very dependent on what is going on in the Middle East. If the extremists gain power in Syria,the situation would deteriorate for Afghanistan,Central Asia,even the Middle East. Now thank god that all Europeans are sending their <U+0091>militants<U+0092> to Syria and on the other hand giving information to the government that these people are there. They want to finish everything there,because if these people get back to their home countries,nobody will know what will happen. So they are prolonging the situation this way… A dead militant is better than a live one. So a good victory in Syria and a good victory against extremism in the region will show us a better future in Afghanistan. After such deals,everyone is going to work with a very constructive approach… There is room for India and Iran to cooperate on Afghanistan. We are offering Indians better access to Afghanistan through Chabahar,we are trying to facilitate goods to Afghanistan. In Pakistan<U+0092>s case,well everyone knows we can<U+0092>t take Pakistan and put it in South America. So we should all think about how we can help Pakistan,how we can help their government for better governance. So we offer help. Let me tell you a secret. In the beginning of this pipeline,from the Iranian point of view,the approach was that all destinations should be through Europe,for better money,economic influence and new technologies. If we offered this pipeline to Pakistan and India,it was not because of an economic purpose. It was for linking these three countries for their interests <U+0097>we know of their desperate need for energy. We are still for that. But we need a more powerful approach from Pakistan… They are falling in love with some countries,we are waiting to see what happens to this love. Let<U+0092>s not jump into the Iran-America relationship,which is very,very complicated. They have humiliated our nation <U+0097> it<U+0092>s a real thing. They should change their approach,it<U+0092>s a must. It<U+0092>s not about giving greetings during Ramzan or other nonsense. Rakesh Sinha: So do you have to explain the accord to your own people,now that you<U+0092>re shaking hands with Satan? The world is changing,maybe the Satans are changing as well. They should behave and maybe there will be a new phenomenon. Vijaita Singh: In 2012,there was an attack on an Israeli diplomat here in Delhi,and India asked Iran for some information as the accused allegedly belonged to Iran. Any development on that front? There have been some papers and information exchanged between the two countries,but let<U+0092>s put that aside. There was no logic behind that attempt to come from Iran. We used to have very good relations with the Indians and we didn<U+0092>t need to deteriorate them. If you go to your own newspaper articles from that time,you will see very artificial things in that. You see,when you go to the Zionist people,they link everything to each other… We have been a real country for thousands of years and it<U+0092>s very different between a nation with a history and an artificial city-state which brought people from all over the world,whether white Jews,black Jews,yellow Jews,saying that this is a country. It<U+0092>s nonsense…. Personally,I think,you will find Israelis behind this (attack). Sharon Thambala\*: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated that Israel should be wiped off the face of the Earth. Our stand on the Zionist regime has been the same for many years. We think the only solution to the Zionist regime is through democracy. One nation,combined of Jews,Christians and Muslims,each person with one vote. We believe if they go through such a channel,as South Africa or Russia,you will see a new regime coming up,which we definitely respect. And they can represent themselves in the region without having to fight anybody. At least it will be coming through something real,not bringing some people and saying this is a country based on race. In the 21st century,it<U+0092>s a shame to create a country on race. We<U+0092>re threatened all the time. Everybody is taking military action off the table and they<U+0092>re still putting it back on. Their only solution is <U+0091>attack Iran<U+0092>. When they wanted to attack Iraq or attacked Syria or Sudan,they didn<U+0092>t announce it in advance. Why is it Iran all the time you<U+0092>re attacking? Because they can<U+0092>t,and they don<U+0092>t want to. If they could,they would,but they can<U+0092>t. Rakesh Sinha: What about the scientists who were targeted? Yes,they were targeted and killed. But we have thousands of scientists. You can kill one,five,10,15,50,but you can<U+0092>t kill thousands. So the way we are protecting ourselves is mass production of everything,whether it<U+0092>s scientists or centrifuges. Kaunain Sheriff \*: How does Iran perceive the rising prominence of China in the region? Our relations with the Chinese are quite good. Even during the period of sanctions,they were very smart and didn<U+0092>t listen to the Americans. They established very good economic relations,especially in investments. Ambreen Khan: What is your take on Narendra Modi versus the Congress? This is not our business <U+0097> we can just enjoy and we are enjoying. Anybody who comes up,we believe will want better relations with Iran. This is something we see in all parties,governments. Our leadership will concentrate on having good relations with India.