

## Iran Dialogue or US Diplomatic Detour?

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*It is very unfortunate to note that the United States has constantly sought to depict the Islamic Republic in the light of a tenacious nation resilient to any logic and dialogue whatsoever.*

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has [emphasized the Islamic Republic's readiness to hold negotiations](#) on the country's nuclear energy program in a win-win situation.

"We have repeatedly expressed our readiness and announced that we are ready for talks in a win-win situation."

He added that Iran has never lost the "opportunity for diplomacy."

Iranian officials are pessimistic about any upcoming dialogue with the US as they almost unanimously believe that Washington is not consistent in its policies and that it should first show some good will instead of resorting to an unacceptable bullying attitude. Spokesman for Iranian Majlis Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy Hossein Naqavi Hosseini slams the contradictions between what Washington says and what it does and urges the US to show some goodwill if it ever seeks to hold talks with the Islamic Republic.

"The Americans are not honest in their words....there is no consistency in their words and actions."

A historical look at Tehran-Washington relations testifies to the antagonistic nature of Washington in dealing with Iran.

According to Tim Guldemann, former Swiss ambassador to Tehran, Iran issued a proposal to the United States in May 2003 and called for negotiations on a number of issues. Based on the proposal, the US should accept a dialogue "in mutual respect" and agree that Iran put the following aims on the agenda:

- 1) Halt US hostile behavior and rectifications of status of Iran in the US: (interference in internal or external relations, "axis of evil", terrorism list.)
- 2) Abolishment of all sanctions: commercial sanctions, frozen assets, judgments (FSIA), impediments in international trade and financial institutions.
- 3) Iraq: democratic and fully representative government in Iraq, support of Iranian claims for Iraqi reparations, respect for Iranian national interests in Iraq and religious links to Najaf/Karbala.
- 4) Full access to peaceful nuclear technology, biotechnology and chemical technology.

5) Recognition of Iran's legitimate security interests in the region with according defense capacity.

6) Terrorism: pursuit of anti-Iranian terrorists, above all the MKO and support for repatriation of their members in Iraq, decisive actions against anti-Iranian terrorists, above all MKO and affiliated organizations in the US.

However, the Bush administration rejected the proposal and exerted additional pressure on the Islamic Republic.

In August 2005, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom presented their proposal for a long-term agreement which was dismissed by Iran simply because it did not recognize Iran's right to enrichment.

In 2010, Brazil and Turkey conducted a diplomatic initiative to broker the TRR (Tehran Research Reactor) fuel swap with Iran. It was agreed that the Islamic Republic of Iran deposit 1200 kg LEU in Turkey. In an April 20 letter to the leaders of the two countries, US President Obama [said](#), "For us, Iran's agreement to transfer 1,200 kilograms of Iran's low enriched uranium (LEU) out of the country would build confidence and reduce regional tensions by substantially reducing Iran's LEU stockpile. I want to underscore that this element is of fundamental importance for the United States."

The fruit of the initiative was the May 17 Tehran Declaration agreed among Lula da Silva, Erdogan, and Ahmadinejad. While the trio recalled "the right of all State Parties, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy (as well as nuclear fuel cycle including enrichment activities) for peaceful purposes without discrimination", they [agreed](#):

1) the nuclear fuel exchange is instrumental in initiating cooperation in different areas, especially with regard to peaceful nuclear cooperation including nuclear power plant and research reactors construction.

2) Based on this point the nuclear fuel exchange is a starting point to begin cooperation and a positive constructive move forward among nations. Such a move should lead to positive interaction and cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear activities replacing and avoiding all kinds of confrontation through refraining from measures, actions and rhetorical statements that would jeopardize Iran's rights and obligations under the NPT.

3) Based on the above, in order to facilitate the nuclear cooperation mentioned above, the Islamic Republic of Iran agrees to deposit 1200 kg LEU in Turkey. While in Turkey this LEU will continue to be the property of Iran. Iran and the IAEA may station observers to monitor the safekeeping of the LEU in Turkey.

4) Iran will notify the IAEA in writing through official channels of its agreement with the above within seven days following the date of this declaration. Upon the positive response of the Vienna Group (US, Russia, France and the IAEA) further details of the exchange will be elaborated through a written agreement and proper arrangement between Iran and the Vienna Group that specifically committed themselves to deliver 120 kg of fuel needed for the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR).

However, France, Russia, and the United States rejected the Tehran Declaration for reasons

only known to themselves and easily comprehensible to others.

In 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made an unprecedented move and [sent an 18-page letter to George W. Bush](#), then US president, an act which was interpreted by some as an invitation to dialogue with the United States.

While the letter – thought to be the first from an Iranian president to a US leader since Iran’s 1979 revolution- addressed the paradoxical nature of Washington’s policies all across the world and addressed crucial issues such as the fake claim that Iraq possessed WMDs as a pretext to launch an invasion of the country, and billions of dollars spent from the common purse to inflict pain and misery upon the people of Iraq and America, it could have been used by the United States as a first step towards resolving an old-time gaping problem between the two countries.

Instead, Washington officials made a strategic mistake, ponderously ignored the letter and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice dismissed the letter as “offering nothing new” and the White House said there would be no formal written reply.

The letter was favorably received by many media channels. The Peninsula, a Qatari news site, saw it as “a taboo-breaking initiative ... an opening—even if only slim—for the longtime foes to engage in a dialogue.” Arab News of Saudi Arabia hailed it as “remarkable and encouraging ... an unexpected diplomatic opening.” Germany’s Der Spiegel [calls](#) it “a deft move for Ahmadinejad’s image in the Middle East.”

After all, the letter was a good sign that Iran was interested in talks but on equal terms and in an ambiance of mutual respect, a condition the US has spitefully declined.

In a sudden turn of events, however, things seem to be taking a new spin and the US has made some gestures to the effect that it wishes a direct talk with the Islamic Republic. A recent report indicates that US President Barack Obama is planning to propose to Iran that it negotiate directly with the Americans about its nuclear program. According to the report, Obama’s move was made without any coordination or consultation with Israel and that Washington will allow a period of four to five months for negotiations with Tehran. If the talks fail, the report says, they may then resort to the military option.

Be that as it may, so far, the Islamic Republic has taken constructive steps towards talks with Washington in order to allay international concerns and resolve any ambiguities surrounding its nuclear program and each time Washington has embarked on a crooked diplomatic detour and has demonstrated a strong penchant for political approach-avoidance.

Does it not mean that Iran’s nuclear issue is not an issue at all but part of Washington’s pretext to persevere in its path of political pungency?

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