

Iran-US Interim Agreement: Historic Breakthrough or Historic Sellout?

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The recent interim accord between the six world powers and Iran has been hailed as an “historic breakthrough”, a “significant accomplishment” by most leading politicians, editorialists and columnists (Financial Times, (FT) 11/26/13, p. 2), the exceptions being notably Israeli leaders and the Zionist power brokers in North America and Western Europe (FT 11/26/13, p. 3).

What constitutes this “historic breakthrough”? Who got what? Did the agreement provide for symmetrical concessions? Does the interim agreement strengthen or weaken the prospects for peace and prosperity in the Gulf and the Middle East? To address these and other questions, one also has to include the powerful influence wielded by Israel on US and European policymakers (Stephen Lendman <lendmanstephen@gmail.com 11/26/13; 11/27/13). Equally important, the current ‘interim’ agreement is just that – it is a first, limited agreement, which does not in any way spell out the strategic objectives of the major imperial powers. Any realistic appreciation of the significance of the interim agreement requires putting it into historical perspective.

The Historical Record: Past Precedents

For over a decade the major US intelligence agencies have published detailed accounts of Iran’s nuclear program (see especially the National Intelligence Estimate 2007 (NIE)). The common consensus has been that Iran did not have any program for developing nuclear weapons (National Intelligence Estimate 2004, 2007). As a consequence of this ‘absence of evidence’, the entire Western offensive against Iran had to focus on Iran’s “potential capacity” to shift sometime in the future towards a weapons program. The current agreement is directed toward undermining Iran’s potential ‘capacity’ to have a nuclear weapons program: there are no weapons to destroy, no weapon plans exist, no war plans exist and there are no strategic offensive military operations on the Iranian ‘drawing board’. We know this, because repeated US intelligence reports have told us that no weapons programs exist! So the entire current negotiations are really over weakening Iran’s ongoing peaceful, legal nuclear program and undermining any future advance in nuclear technology that might protect Iran from an Israeli or US attack, when they decide to activate their “military option”, as was pulled off in the war to destroy Iraq .

Secondly, Iran’s flexible and accommodating concessions are not new or a reflection of a newly elected President. As Gareth Porter has pointed out: Nearly ten years ago, on Nov. 15, 2004, Iran agreed “on a voluntary basis to continue and extend an existing suspension of enrichment to include all enrichment related and reprocessing activities” (Gareth Porter, Inter Press Service 11/26/13). According to Porter, Iran was ending “all

manufacturing, assembly, installation and testing of centrifuges or their components". Despite these generous concessions, on March 2005, the Europeans and the US refused to negotiate on an Iranian proposal for a comprehensive settlement that would guarantee against enrichment toward weapons grade. Iran ended its voluntary suspension of all enrichment activity. The US, led by Zionists embedded in Treasury, (Stuart Levey) then escalated sanctions. Europe and the UN Security Council followed in kind. The practice of the US and Europe first securing major concessions from Iran and then refusing to reciprocate by pursuing a comprehensive settlement is a well established diplomatic practice. Iran's flexibility and concessions were apparently interpreted as "signs of weakness" to be exploited in their push toward 'regime change' (An Unusual Success for Sanctions Policy, FT 11/27/13, p. 10). Sanctions are seen as "effective" political-diplomatic weapons designed to further weaken the regime. Policy-makers continue to believe that sanctions should be maintained as a tool to divide the Iranian elite, disarm and dismantle the country's defensive capacity and to prepare for "regime change" or a military confrontation without fear of serious resistance from the Iranians.

The entire charade of Iran's 'nuclear weapons as a threat' has been orchestrated by the Israeli regime and its army of 'Israel Firsters' embedded in the US Executive, Congress and mass media. The 'Big Lie', promoted by Israel's propaganda machine and network of agents, has been repeatedly and thoroughly refuted by the sixteen major US Intelligence Estimates or NIE's, especially in 2004 and 2007. These consensus documents were based on extensive research, inside sources (spies) and highly sophisticated surveillance. The NIEs categorically state that Iran suspended all efforts toward a nuclear weapons program in 2003 and has not made any decision or move to restart that program. However, Israel has actively spread propaganda, based on fabricated intelligence reports, claiming the contrary in order to trick and push the US into a disastrous military confrontation with Israel's regional rival. And the President of the United States ignores his own intelligence sources in order to repeat Israel's 'Big Lie'!

Given the fact that Iran is not a 'nuclear threat', now or in the past, and given that the US, European and Israeli leaders know this, why do they continue and even increase the sanctions against Iran? Why do they threaten to destroy Iran with pre-emptive attacks? Why the current demands for even more concessions from Tehran? The current negotiations and 'agreement' tell us a great deal about the 'ultimate' or final strategic aims of the White House and its European allies.

The 'Interim Agreement': A Most Asymmetrical Compromise

Iran's negotiators conceded to the '5 plus 1' all their major demands while they received the most minimum of concessions, (FT 1/25/13, p. 2).

Iran agreed (1) to stop all enrichment to 20 percent, (2) reduce the existing 20 percent enriched stockpile to zero, (3) convert all low enriched uranium to a form that cannot be enriched to a higher level, (4) halt progress on its enrichment capacity, (5) leave inoperable half of its centrifuges at Natanz and three-quarters of those at Fordow, and (6) freeze all activities at Arak heavy water facility which when built could produce plutonium. Iran also agreed to end any plans to construct a facility capable of reprocessing plutonium from spent fuel. The Iranian negotiators agreed to the most pervasive and intensive "inspections" of its most important strategic defense facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has been closely allied with the US and its EU counterparts. These "inspections" and data collection will take place on a daily bases and include access to

Natanz and Fordow. The strategic military value of these inspections is inestimable because it could provide data, heretofore unavailable, for any future missile strike from the US or Israel when they decide to shift from negotiations to the 'military option'. In addition, the IAEA inspectors will be allowed to access other strategic facilities, including sites for developing centrifuges, uranium mines and mills. Future "negotiations" may open highly sensitive military defense sites such as Parchin, where conventional missiles and warheads are stored.

Obviously, there will not be any reciprocal inspections of the US missile sites, warships and military bases in the Persian Gulf, which store weapons of mass destruction aimed at Iran ! Nor will the IAEA inspect Israel 's nuclear weapons—facilities in Dimona - despite Israeli threats to attack Iran . No comparable diminution of "military capacity" or nuclear weapons, aimed at Iran by some members of the '5 plus 1 and Israel ' is included in this "historic breakthrough".

The '5 plus 1' conceded meager concessions: Unfreezing of 7% of Iranian-owned assets sequestered in Western banks (\$7 billion of \$100 billion) and 'allowing' Iran to enrich uranium to 5 percent -and even that "concession" is conditioned by the proviso that it does not exceed current stockpiles of 5% enriched uranium. While the Iranian negotiators claim they secured (sic) 'the right' to enrich uranium, the US refused to even formally acknowledge it!

In effect, Iran has conceded the maximum concessions regarding its strategic national defenses, nuclear facilities and uranium enrichment in what is supposedly the 'initial' round of negotiations, while 'receiving' the minimum of reciprocal concessions. This highly unfavorable, asymmetrical framework, will lead the US to see Iran as 'ripe for regime change' and demand even more decisive concessions designed to further weaken Iran 's defensive capacity. Future concessions will increase Iran 's vulnerability to intelligence gathering and undermine its role as a regional power and strategic ally of the Lebanese Hezbollah, the current beleaguered governments in Syria and Iraq and the Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

The 'Final Settlement': Decline and Fall of the Islamic Nationalist Republic ?

The real goals of the US sanctions policy and the recent decision to enter into negotiations with Iran have to do with several imperial objectives. The first objective is to facilitate the rise of a neo-liberal regime in Iran , which would be committed to privatizing major oil and gas fields and attracting foreign capital even at the cost of strategic national defense.

President Rohani is seen in Washington as the Islamic version of the former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev. Rohani, like his 'model' Gorbachev, 'gave away the store' while expecting Iran 's imperial adversaries to reciprocate.

The '5 plus 1', mostly veterans of the 'imperial shake down', will take all of Rohani's concessions and demand even more! They will "allow" Iran to recover its own frozen assets in slow droplets, which the neo-liberals in Tehran will celebrate as 'victories' even while the country stagnates under continued sanctions and the people suffer! The US Administration will retain sanctions in order to accommodate their Israeli-Zionist patrons and to provoke even deeper fissures in the regime. Washington 's logic is that the more concessions

Teheran surrenders, the more difficult it will be to reverse the process under public pressure from the Iranian people. This 'rift' between the conciliatory government of Rohani and the Iranian people, according to CIA strategists, will lead to greater internal discontent in Iran and will further weaken the regime. A regime under siege will need to rely even more on their Western interlocutors. President Rohani 'relying on the 5-plus-1' will be like the condemned leaning into the hangman's noose.

Rohani and the Neo-Liberal Collaborators

The ascendancy of Rohani to the Presidency brings in its wake an entire new political-economic leadership intent on facilitating large-scale, long-term penetration by Western and Chinese oil and gas companies in the most lucrative sites. Iran's new oil minister, Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, has made overtures to all the oil majors, and offers to revise and liberalize the terms for investment and provide concessions designed to greatly enhance multinational profits, in the most lucrative fields (FT, 11/27/13, p. 2). Zangeneh has kicked out the nationalists and replaced them with a cohort of liberal economists. He is preparing to eventually lay-off tens of thousands of public sector oil employees as an incentive to attract foreign corporate partners. He is prepared to lower fuel subsidies for the Iranian people and raise energy prices for domestic consumers. The liberals in power have the backing of millionaires, speculators and political power brokers, like Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani head of the key Expediency Council, which drafts policy. Many of Rafsanjani's followers have been appointed to key positions in President Rohani's administration (FT, 11/26/13, p.3).

Central to the 'Troika's (Rohani-Rafsanjani-Zangeneh) strategy is securing the collaboration of multi-national energy corporations. However that requires lifting the US-imposed sanctions against Iran in the shortest time possible. This explains the hasty, unseemly and one-sided Iranian concessions to the '5-plus-1'. In other words, the driving force behind Iran's giveaways is not the "success of sanctions" but the ascendancy to power of the Iranian comprador class and its neo-liberal ideology which informs their economic strategy.

Several major obstacles confront the 'Troika'. The major concessions, initially granted, leave few others to concede, short of dismantling the entire nuclear energy infrastructure and lobotomizing its entire scientific and technical manpower, which would destroy the legitimacy of the regime. Secondly, having easily secured major concessions without lifting the sanctions the '5-plus-1' are free to escalate their demands for further concessions, which in effect will deepen Iran's vulnerability to Western espionage, terrorism (as in the assassination of Iranian scientists and engineers) and preemptive attack. As the negotiations proceed it will become crystal clear that the US intends to force the 'Troika' to open the gates to more overtly pro-western elites in order to eventually polarize Iranian society.

The end-game is a weakened, divided, liberalized regime, vulnerable to internal and external threats and willing to cut-off support to nationalist regimes in the Middle East, including Palestine, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The US recognized and seized upon the rise of the new neo-liberal Rohani regime and secured major unilateral concessions as a down payment to move step-by-step toward bloody regime change. Washington's "end game" is the conversion of Iran to a client petrol-state allied with the Saudi-Israeli axis.

As far-fetched as that appears today, the logic of negotiations is moving in that direction.

The Israeli-US Differences: A Question of Tactics and Timing

Israeli leaders and their Zionist agents, embedded in the US government, howl, pull out their hair and bluster against the '5-plus-1' transitional agreement with Iran . They downplay the enormous one-sided concessions. They rant and rave about "hidden agenda", "deceit and deception". They fabricate conspiracies and repeat lies about secret "nuclear weapons programs" beyond the reach (and imagination) of any non-Zionist inspector. But the reality is that the "historic breakthrough" includes the dismantling of a major part of Iran 's nuclear infrastructure, while retaining sanctions – a huge victory of the Zionists! The '5-plus-1' negotiated a deal which has secured deeper and more extensive changes in Iran while strengthening Western power in the Persian Gulf than all of Netanyahu's decade-long campaign of issuing 'military threats'.

Netanyahu and his brainwashed Zionist-Jewish defenders in the US insist on new, even harsher sanctions because they want immediate war and regime-change (a puppet regime). Echoing his Israeli boss Netanyahu, New York Senator Chuck "the schmuck" Schumer, commenting on the interim agreement brayed, "The disproportionality of this agreement makes it more likely that Democrats and Republicans will pass additional sanctions" (Barrons 12/2/13 p14) This is the same stupid policy that the embedded Zionists in Washington pursued with Iraq . Under the Bush Presidency, top neo-con Zionists, like Wolfowitz, Ross, Indyk, Feith, Abrams and Libby, implemented Ariel Sharon's war dictates: (1) murdered Saddam Hussein (regime change) (2) destroyed the Iraq's economy, society and modern infrastructure, and (3) provoked ethnic fragmentation and religious war – costing the US over 2 trillion dollars on the war, thousands of US lives (millions of Iraqi lives) and at a cost of hundreds of billions in high oil prices to US consumers – further shattering the US domestic economy.

Among the few moderately intelligent and influential Zionist journalists, Gideon Rachman, who realizes the strategic value of the step-by-step approach of the Obama regime, has called for the White House "to take on the Israel lobby over Iran " (FT, 11/26/13, p. 10). Rachman knows that if Israel's howling stooges in the US Congress drag the country into war, the American people will turn against the Israeli lobby, its fellow travelers and, most likely, Israel. Rachman and a few others with a grain of political sophistication know that the Rohani regime in Tehran has just handed over key levers of power to the US . They know that the negotiations are moving toward greater integration of Iran into the US orbit. They know, in the final instance, that Obama's step-by-step diplomatic approach will be less costly and more effective than Netanyahu's military 'final solution'. And they know that, ultimately, Obama's and Israel 's goal is the same: a weak neo-liberalized Iran , which cannot challenge Israel 's military dominance, nuclear weapons monopoly, annexation of Palestine and aggression against Lebanon and Syria .

Conclusion

Having secured a "freeze" on Iran's consequential nuclear research and having on site intelligence on all Iran's major national defense and security facilities, the US can compile a data base for an offensive military strategy whenever it likes. Iran , on the other hand, receives no information or reports on US, European or Israeli military movement, weapons facilities or offensive regional capabilities. This is despite the fact that the '5-plus-1' countries and Israel have recently launched numerous devastating offensive military operations and wars in the region (Iraq , Afghanistan , Lebanon , Libya and Syria). Having set the agenda for negotiations as one of further unilateral concessions from Iran , the US

can at any point, threaten to end negotiations - and follow up with its 'military option'.

The next step in the unilateral disarmament of Iran will be the US demand to close the strategic Arak heavy water plant. The US will demand that Iran produce a basic minimum amount of uranium and retain a stock pile to cover a few days or weeks for energy, research or medical isotopes. Washington will strip Iran of its capacity to enrich by imposing quantitative and qualitative limits on the centrifuges that Iran can possess and operate. During the next round of negotiations, the US will preclude Iran from undertaking the reprocessing of uranium at Arak or any other site. The US will tell 'the Troika' that the "right" (sic) to enrich does not extend to the right to reprocess. The US will demand stringent "transparency" for Iran, while maintaining its own high level secrecy, evasion and ambiguity with regard to its military, diplomatic and economic sanctions policy.

In a word, the US will demand that Iran surrender its sovereignty and subject itself to the colonial oversight of an imperial power, which has yet to make a single move in even reducing economic sanctions. The loss of sovereignty, the continued sanctions and the drive by the US to curtail Iran's regional influence will certainly lead to popular discontent in Iran - and a response from the nationalist and populist military (Revolutionary Guards) and the working poor. The crisis resulting from the Troika's adoption of the "Gorbachev Model" will lead to an inevitable confrontation. Overtime the US will seek out an Islamist strongman, an Iranian version of Yeltsin who can savage the nationalists and popular movements and turn over the keys to the state, treasury and oil fields to a "moderate and responsible" pro-Western client regime.

The entire US strategy of degrading Iran's military defenses and securing major neo-liberal "reforms" depends on President Rohani remaining in power, which can only result from the Obama regime's compliance in lifting some of the oil and banking sanctions (FT 12/1/13, p. 6). Paradoxically, the greatest obstacle to achieving Washington's strategic roll-back goal is Netanyahu's power to block sanction relief - and impose even, harsher sanctions. The result of such an Israel Firster victory in the US would be the end of negotiations, the strengthening of Iran's nuclear program, the demise of the oil privatization program and added support to regional nationalist movements and governments. President Rohani desperately needs western imperial reassurance of the benefits (sanction relief) of his initial giveaways. Otherwise his credibility at home would be irreparably damaged.

The imperial prize of a militarily weakened and neo-liberalized Iran, collaborating in maintaining the status quo in the Middle East, is enormous but it clashes with the Zionist Power Configuration, which insists on all power to the Jewish state from the Suez to the Persian Gulf!

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