

Deceptive Designs: Washington's insincere innuendos of direct talks with Tehran

By Yuram Abdullah Weiler

2013-02-10

“You [the United States] promising that you will impose crippling sanctions until you paralyze the [Iranian] nation, does this demonstrate goodwill or evil intent?” asked the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.¹

The Potomac Potentates have proclaimed a new set of sanctions in another abortive attempt to tyrannize Tehran.² While further U.S.-imposed economic sanctions on Iran is hardly headline news, the juxtaposition of this announcement only four days after U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's “offer” of direct talks with Tehran at the Munich Security Conference dramatically spotlights the absence of U.S. credibility. “We have made it clear at the outset that ... we would be prepared to meet bilaterally with the Iranian leadership. ... That offer stands,”³ said the U.S. vice president on February 2, 2013 in answer to a question posed by conference chair Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, adding, “I don't know when we will have direct talks between the United States and Iran. That is a subject for the president of the United States.”⁴

In response, Ayatollah Khamenei responded negatively to the latest peace platitude from the Washingtonian plutocrats, saying in no uncertain terms, “You [the U.S.] point a gun at Iran and say, ‘Either negotiate or we'll shoot!’ Know that pressure and negotiation are not compatible together and the [Iranian] nation will not be intimidated by these things.”⁵ Personally, I am in full agreement with the Supreme Leader's assessment. Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in February of 1979, the U.S. attitude towards normalizing relations with the Islamic Republic has ranged from apathetic to threatening. Let us briefly examine Iran-U.S. relations, which truthfully could be described as a tale of treachery against Tehran.

The United States has been in a perpetual state of “national emergency” with respect to Iran since November 14, 1979 when Executive Order 12170 was signed by former President Jimmy Carter. The text of the order reads in part:

I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States, find that the situation in Iran constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States and hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat.⁶

Since the time the original order was signed, every successive U.S. president — Reagan, Bush Senior, Clinton and Bush Junior — has felt the need to continue the “state of emergency” with respect to Iran. Following suit, Obama again renewed the decree on November 9, 2012:

Our relations with Iran have not yet returned to normal, and the process of implementing the agreements with Iran, dated January 19, 1981, is still under way. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared on November 14, 1979, with respect to Iran, beyond November 14, 2012.⁷

The January 19, 1981 agreements with Iran mentioned above refers to the Algiers Accords whose terms dictated that release of U.S. Embassy hostages and resolution of other claims by U.S. nationals against Iran should have resulted in a process ending in normalization of Iran-U.S.

relations.⁸ As set forth in the document, “[T]he United States will restore the financial position of Iran, in so far as possible, to that which existed prior to November 14, 1979.” For its part, the U.S. declared “that it is and from now on will be the policy of the United States not to intervene, directly or indirectly, politically or militarily, in Iran's internal affairs.”⁹ In short, Iranian funds frozen by the state of emergency, which were transferred to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York at the Bank of England, were supposed to be released to Iran upon release of the U.S. hostages.¹⁰ Obviously, the U.S. did not uphold its part of the agreement, which, of course, is not new as American history is replete with broken treaties made with its Native Peoples.¹¹

These terms of the Algiers Accords were never fully implemented,¹² no doubt due in large part to the actions of the man who became president the day after the agreement was signed, Ronald Reagan, who was obsessed with confronting the former Soviet Union and was largely apathetic towards Iran. It was not until the Zionist invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the subsequent abduction of Americans, which the U.S. alleged was linked to Iran, that Reagan changed his “neutrality” in the Iran-Iraq war and threw full U.S. support behind Saddam’s regime.¹³ In 1983, he initiated Operation Staunch, a worldwide attempt to embargo arms shipments desperately needed by the Islamic Republic to defend against the invading Iraqis. By 1987, Reagan launched Operation Earnest Will in an attempt to keep Western oil shipments moving through the Persian Gulf, then Operation Praying Mantis in 1988, under which the U.S. attacked Iranian ships and ultimately shot down Iran Air flight 655 on July, 3 1988 killing 290 people.¹⁴

U.S. relations with Iran did not thaw after the inauguration of George H.W. Bush, who maintained the hostile attitude and policies of his predecessor Reagan. Bush’s policy initially was to support Saddam’s regime in Iraq in hopes of mitigating the dictator’s aggressive tendencies and to further alienate Iran, which was viewed as the greater threat, as was formalized in National Security Directive 26 and signed by the U.S. president in October 1989.¹⁵ Such erroneous views should have changed when Saddam invaded Kuwait in August 1990, but despite Iranian efforts to assist Washington during its war against Iraq, Bush Senior’s distrust of Iran continued to grow as U.S.-Iran relations slowly deteriorated.¹⁶

The downward trend in relations persisted during the administration of William Jefferson Clinton, who implemented a “dual containment” policy against both Iran and Iraq. Accusing Iran of being behind the Khobar Saudi Arabia attacks in 1996, Clinton initiated CIA covert operations under the code name Sapphire targeting Iran’s intelligence personnel. While there was a slight improvement through informal dialogue, Iran’s requests for U.S. action concerning the downing of Iran Air Flight 655 by the U.S.S. Vincennes went unheeded.¹⁷ Furthermore, Clinton signed Executive Order 13059, which was in addition to his previous Executive Orders 12957 and 12959, prohibiting virtually all U.S. commercial activities with Iran.¹⁸

Hopes of improved relations under Bush Junior’s administration, which arose after Iran assisted the U.S. to topple the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, quickly vanished when he accused Tehran of supplying arms and munitions to insurgents in Iraq. Adding insult to injury, Bush called Iran a member of the “Axis of Evil” in his January 29, 2002 State of the [U.S.] Union address and soon afterwards, began accusing Iran of “illegal” uranium enrichment and developing nuclear weapons. While Iran stood firm on its right to a peaceful nuclear energy program, the Bush administration pushed four resolutions through the U.N. Security Council, numbers 1737, 1747,

1803 and 1835, which froze Iranian assets and imposed other sanctions. In addition, the U.S. forced major international banks to restrict transacting business with Iran's banking sector. Despite the conclusion of the U.S. Director of National Intelligence in 2007 that Iran had no covert nuclear weapons program, U.S. accusations and threats continued.¹⁹

Hopes for a breakthrough in Iran-U.S. relations were perhaps higher with Barack Obama than with any previous U.S. president. Unfortunately, those hopes were squelched when Obama, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, proved to be robust with rhetoric but short on sincerity, except in the case of sanctions against Iran. After pressuring Security Council members for six months, Obama pushed through U.N. Resolution 1929, which contained additional sanctions blocking certain technology transfers to Iran, on June 9, 2010.²⁰ Since then, Obama has aggressively added more and more sanctions against Iran including:

- Banning the world's banks from completing oil transactions with Iranian banks;²¹
- Restricting the purchase or acquisition of Iranian petrochemical products;
- Forbidding the provision of material support to the National Iranian Oil Company; and
- Restricting Iran's access to the international financial system.²²

The European Union as well as individual countries such as Great Britain, Switzerland, Japan, Australia and Canada, have also instituted their own sanctions on Iran, which include:

- Prohibiting any transactions with Iranian banks except for humanitarian purposes;
- Barring Western brokers from insuring Iranian oil shipments;
- Banning the export of equipment and technology for production of natural gas; and
- Freezing assets of individuals and organizations believed to be involved in Iran's peaceful nuclear program.²³

Since the goal of the U.S.-imposed unilateral sanctions is to choke the economic life out of Iran, the Ayatollah is correct to refuse such phony U.S. "offers" of direct talks. Tyranny, not peace, is what the U.S. supports in the Middle East as it has ever since inheriting the title of Arch Tyrant from the British by its 1953 CIA coup in Iran. The U.S. empowers the despicable Saudi regime²⁴ which exports its Wahhabi distortion of Islam by means of U.S. petrodollars, while the U.S. has tried to contain Iran for the past 34 years to prevent the spread of the Islamic Revolution.

Washington is engulfed in misology, for it thinks that sanctions will achieve its goals in Iran when its own experts testify to the contrary.²⁵ And when Washington is finally forced to cease and desist from its perpetual tirade of threats, military interference and covert operations — as eventually it will be — the Islamic Revolution will spread from Iran throughout the Middle East.

Endnotes

¹ "Leader of the Islamic Revolution in a meeting with Air Force Commanders: 'I am not a diplomat; I am a revolutionary, and I speak clearly, honestly and firmly.'" *Tabnak Professional News Site*, 7 February 2013, accessed 8 February 2013, <http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/301292/من-دیپلمات-نیستم-انقلابی-ام-و-حصریح-صادقان>. Translation is by the author, the Persian quote is:

«شما به قول خودتان تحریم‌های فلج‌کننده می‌گذارید تا ملت را فلج کنید؛ آیا این نشان دهنده حسن نیت است یا سوءنیت؟»

² Thomas Erdbrink and David E. Sanger, "U.S. Increases Pressure of Economic War on Tehran," *The New York Times*, 6 February 2013, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/07/world/middleeast/us-ratchets-up-an-economic-war-against-tehran.html?pagewanted=all>.

³ Joseph Biden, "Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to the Munich Security Conference, Hotel Bayerischer Hof Munich, Germany," *The White House, Office of Vice President*, 2 February 2013, accessed 8 February 2013,

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/02/remarks-vice-president-joe-biden-munich-security-conference-hotel-bayeri>.

⁴ “Biden raises possibility of direct U.S.-Iran talks,” *Reuters*, 3 February 2013, accessed 8 February 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/03/us-iran-nuclear-idUSBRE91107720130203>.

⁵ *Tabnak*, *ibid.* Translation is by the author, the Persian quote is:

“اسلحه را مقابل ملت ایران می‌گیرید و می‌گویید یا مذاکره یا شلیک می‌کنیم! اما بدانید فشار و مذاکره با هم سازگار نیست و ملت مرعوب این چیزها نخواهد شد.”

⁶ Jimmy Carter, “Blocking Iranian Government Property,” *Executive Order 12170*, 14 November 1979, accessed 8 February 2013, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/Executive%20Order%2012170.pdf>.

⁷ Barack Obama, “Letter -- Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to Iran,” *The White House*, Office of the Press Secretary, 9 November 2012, accessed 8 February 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/11/09/letter-continuation-national-emergency-respect-iran>.

⁸ “Executive Order 12276--Direction relating to establishment of escrow accounts,” [U.S.] *National Archives*, 19 January 1981, accessed 8 February 2013, <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/12276.html>.

⁹ “Declaration of the Government of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria,” *Algeria Accords*, 19 January 1981, accessed 8 February 2013, http://www.parstimes.com/history/algiers_accords.pdf.

¹⁰ Jimmy Carter, “Executive Order No. 12278,” 23 January 1981, accessed 8 February 2013, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/12278.pdf>.

¹¹ Ron Jacobs, “The Trail of Broken Treaties: From Wounded Knee to Idle No More,” *Dissident Voice*, 26 January 2013, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://dissidentvoice.org/2013/01/the-trail-of-broken-treaties-from-wounded-knee-to-idle-no-more/>.

¹² “Text of a letter from the President to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate,” *Office of the Press Secretary*, The White House, 16 November 1998, accessed 9 February 2013, http://www.fas.org/news/iran/1998/98111605_nlt.html.

¹³ Geoffrey Kemp, “The Reagan Administration,” *The Iran Primer*, the U.S. Institute of Peace, no date, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/reagan-administration>.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Kemp, *ibid.*

¹⁵ Richard N. Haass, “The George H.W. Bush Administration,” *The Iran Primer*, the U.S. Institute of Peace, no date, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/george-hw-bush-administration>.

¹⁶ Richard N. Haass, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Bruce O. Riedel, “The Clinton Administration,” *The Iran Primer*, the U.S. Institute of Peace, no date, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/clinton-administration>.

¹⁸ “What you need to know about U.S. Sanctions: An overview of O.F.A.C. Regulations involving Sanctions against Iran,” *Office of Foreign Asset Control*, U.S. Department of the Treasury, 23 January 2012, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/iran.pdf>.

¹⁹ Stephen J. Hadley, “The George W. Bush Administration,” *The Iran Primer*, the U.S. Institute of Peace, no date, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/george-w-bush-administration>.

²⁰ John Limbert, “The Obama Administration,” *The Iran Primer*, the U.S. Institute of Peace, no date, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/obama-administration>.

²¹ “Q&A: Iran sanctions,” *BBC News*, 16 October 2012, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15983302>

²² “Fact Sheet: Sanctions Related to Iran,” *Office of the Press Secretary*, *The White House*, 31 July 2012, accessed 8 February 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/31/fact-sheet-sanctions-related-iran>.

²³ “Q&A: Iran sanctions,” *ibid.*

²⁴ Glenn Greenwald, “The US - alongside Saudi Arabia - fights for freedom and democracy in the Middle East,” *Guardian UK*, 12 January 2013, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jan/12/us-saudi-arabia-libya-freedom>.

²⁵ F. Michael Maloof, “Experts: Iran sanctions just won't work,” *WND*, in Joseph Farrah’s *G2 Bulletin*, 27 October 2012, accessed 9 February 2013, <http://www.wnd.com/2012/10/experts-iran-sanctions-just-wont-work/>.