

***COVER PAGE for JAVIER SOLANA
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6 pages re: Iran conflict with the US, EU, and Israel

URGENT TIMELY: IRAN; Working draft

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Pre-negotiation Initiatives

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His Excellency JAVIER SOLANA

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Your Excellency Javier Solana:

A form of pre-negotiation can be usefully adapted now to change the US/ EU relationship with Iran, and in that context progress may be possible on the Israeli conflict with Iran. If the US and Iran do want to start a viable negotiation, the following factors must be addressed effectively, which pre-negotiation makes possible:

1. It is a reality of human nature that men don't back down under threat, they often prefer to fight. That is a gut reaction even if when it appears to be an "unreasonable" choice. Israel is now stating it will use nuclear weapons in a pre-emptive attack to end Iran's nuclear programs, if Iran does not put aside its' nuclear program and the US does not help Israel attack Iran with conventional weapons. That threat is aimed to motivate Iran to back down, but the opposite is likely without a concerted comprehensive negotiation effort offered at the same time that there is pressure.

The burden of negotiation that does not depend on threat is on the US. US failures to use negotiation effectively for progress between Palestinians, and between Palestinians and Israelis, and between the US and Iran for decades, now yields the tragic result that nuclear war is a real possibility for the first time since the Cuban missile crisis. Nuclear powers Pakistan, India, Russia, and China, are all neighbors of Iran and are likely to blame the US for an Israeli nuclear annihilation of Iranians in their backyard.

2. The new EU offer combined with increased sanctions and pressure and demands on Iran has created an opening for change. But a critical piece is still missing – a US offer to create with Iran comprehensive change, starting with a balanced dignified pre-negotiation context, that avoids humiliation for Iran, and ends US threats of regime change along with Iranian uranium enrichment. That is possible if a pre-negotiation framework is built at the start, that addresses the classic sources of negotiation deadlock, that the present US approach insufficiently attends to. Pre-negotiation allows the start of progress with negotiation, by:

(1) protecting honor for Iran (and the US);

(2) not putting any party in a position of weakness relative to the other;

(3) putting aside "ultimatum and demand for capitulation" approach, which the stronger party (e.g. the US) habitually prefers as the dominant party, although that approach is proven to fuel escalation of hostilities, and it precludes honor and reciprocity needed to reduce conflict.

(4) bridging power struggle over "who moves first" to make simultaneous change possible at the start that reassures both sides.

(5) providing a formal context that is balanced and reciprocal in form, even if concessions made within that context are not simultaneous or equivalent or reciprocal, while offering instead a semblance of fairness and mutual change that adds up to change on both sides;

(6) defining formal measures for each side that reflect the concerns and views of both sides at once and promote “two-sided” thinking about the problem and perceived options both sides could accept;

(7) neutralizing one-upmanship

(8) providing means to separate conceptual issues (e.g. thinking, perceptions, guiding precepts) from physical power struggle, by focus on common principles and common goals and acknowledging differing views.

(9) committing to put aside demonization and hate rhetoric and threat on each side, and to define terms of an accommodation;

(10) addressing the central concerns of parties that have been raised by one side and ignored by the other side (e.g. Iran’s support for Hamas’ and Hezbollah’s terrorist attacks; and the US refusal to discuss or release Iranian assets that were frozen when hostages were taken, which issue Iran blocked prior negotiation efforts).

(11) putting aside force {noting the dire outcome of the present direction of Israeli threats to use nuclear weapons if the US does not help Israel attack Iran to end Iran’s continued uranium enrichment; the US and Iran agreeing to mutually put aside respective threats to use force in the context of comprehensive change; developing change across the board that would include agreements for normalization of relations, economic investment in Iran, an end to sanctions, the cessation of Iran’s uranium enrichment; and commitment by the US to end support for those aiming to use force to undermine the Iranian government; and commitment by Iran to end its’ support for those who use violence aiming to undermine Israel.}

3. A form of pre-negotiation was used to start a peace process after years of deadlock for disputes that most negotiation experts had deemed hopelessly intractable, e.g. N. Ireland, S. Africa, Cambodia, the PLO and Israel (Oslo), DPRKorea and ROK, Libya/US, and DPRK/ US. What has proven to work is to build trust in dignified steps that fit both sides’ views, and take steps that alter the main blocks to progress (see point 1).

4. Pre-negotiation can change hostile relationships and avoid war between Iran and the US and Israel by: creating a context of acknowledged common principles and common goals, and acknowledged differences and how each side sees the problem, within which concurrent concessions are honorable and expedient and avoid humiliation and risk (along lines proposed herein). A “formal acknowledgment” approach creates a context for concessions to be promised and implemented in close sequence, in stages.

The US would want Iran to move first on concessions, but if both sides first commit to principles and goals, and acknowledge each side’s mutual and differing concerns and views (e.g. about justice and what causes conflict), a process of change can be begun that both sides shape.

Then formal assurances of US commitment to take action sequentially – if not concurrently – might suffice for Iran to trust moving first (as has the DPRK and Libya accepted – each has been willing to trust that the dignified context and explicit gain offered covers honor sufficiently to reduce the importance of who moves first).

5. Israel has been clear that it will not let its’ security “be at risk” and that it plans to attack Iran within six months, with or without the US – if Iran does not otherwise end its’ uranium enrichment. That includes Israel now publicly has aired a blunt threat of

nuclear attack on Iran sooner or later if Iran does not verifiably end uranium enrichment (NYTimes op ed July 18). That adds to the US burden to create a negotiation that is comprehensive enough to include what Iran and the US both want. (The inclusion of a proven end to Iran's nuclear enrichment would mollify Israel).

6. Pre-negotiation can address how one side's position contributes to the other sides' position. Change is possible if the parties are bridged by addressing the factors that structure the conflict without expecting to rely on threat and dominance.

7. Pre-negotiation takes into account the non-rational factors that shape each side's expressed concerns, which are symmetrically similar, including how each side has conviction that: it is the just party; the other is to blame; the other breaks international agreements; it is beleaguered by the other side's wrongs; and that it must defend honor and national integrity against the other.

8. "Non-rational" factors make traditional negotiation inadequate that focuses on ideas of "reasonable" compromise, backed by the leverage of threat (military and/or economic or political) aimed to motivate change.

9. There is an erroneous US commonplace foreign policy assumption that "nations are not people, they act according to rational interests". It is untrue, nations are led by people who often act according to political pressures and non-rational factors. Rational interests are less guide than potent non-rational beliefs.

10. Non-rational factors shape the one-upmanship maneuvers of each side, in hostile exchange. The US approach of "demands and threat" exacerbates the structure of one-upmanship, without resolve the issues shaping conflict. Conflict is a structural problem negotiation must fit.

11. One-upmanship includes "communication power struggle", hostile exchange of words and actions that reflect battle over core non-rational issues of justice, blame, law, history, who caused what to occur, and what is a fair sequence of actions to reduce or end hostilities.

12. The key to negotiation is to note and address how one side's position contributes to the other side's position.

13. Pre-negotiation provides means to develop thinking of the antagonists in "two-sided terms", to bridge differences. Often reducing conflict requires enabling each side to see and value the other side's views and its' source. Then progress is possible in tandem.

14. Pre-negotiation can utilize what "will" is in evidence on both sides to build change, carefully calibrated to fit both sides' views at each stage of progress.

15. The US often discounts the potency of nationalism and how it limits options and derails plans.

16. The US often discounts the potency of religious beliefs. Few Americans can conceive of the importance to Muslims to protect what they deem sacred, e.g. the Haram al Sharif site over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

17. Pre-negotiation can avoid any direct trade of concessions by focus on principles of cooperation and accord, but it allows a similar result by aiming for comprehensive change. That goal may be necessary since Iran is expected to end uranium enrichment, but the US and Israel have not removed threat of attack, nor has Israel, and nor has Iran, making concurrent change necessary.

Focus on principles of cooperation and accord, and how each party sees the conflict(s) can replace "trading concessions".

18. Hardliners who reject dialogue often prefer to prevail in war rather than make concessions or become involved in a "give and take" process with an enemy that in addition has no certain result. Hardliners often see dialogue as unpatriotic, as giving up the stance as the dominant party calling the shots. Hence hardliners may prefer using force.

Negotiation assumes people can change relationships, and attitudes and hostile policies. Hardliners often prefer to avoid the risk of negotiation, and to instead make "demands" and then conclude "negotiation was tried but failed because the opponent would not capitulate to US terms".

For that reason, negotiation has not made progress, and escalation if the conflict is already seen, now at a dangerous level close to war.

19. Each side correctly sees the other as a threat – now expanded to include Israeli threats to use nuclear weapons, that is unlikely to motivate Iran to put aside its own development of nuclear weapons. **The US and Iran cannot easily back down with honor as war is openly prepared by Israel.** Only decisive moves by the US to insure negotiation is made viable can avoid devastating war that will gravely harm US interests and the entire region. The millions dead if Israel attacks with nuclear weapons, as it says it "must" if Iran does not back down under threat, will be blamed on the US failure to create a negotiated alternative.

20. Pre-negotiation can calibrate precisely the timing and sequence of negotiation steps.

21. Pre-negotiation can precede direct dialogue at the start when that is preferred by one or more parties.

22. Pre-negotiation can be implemented quickly, allowing sufficient progress before President Bush leaves office to avoid Israel being rushed to attack Iran.

21. Pre-negotiation can change attitudes, and demonstrate that hostile relationships can be transformed with mutual effort.

22. Formal acknowledgement is not agreement, nor concession, or political recognition; acknowledgment is a unique neutral form. "Formal Acknowledgement" can precede agreements and concessions, providing a context for both.

23. Formal Acknowledgement can make steps for comprehensive change in stages the natural choice of the parties, with attention to "both sides" concerns. Building change depends on the daily attention to how each side sees the problem and mutual demands, and the sequence of who must do more first. That difficulty almost derailed the N. Ireland peace process, and did derail the Oslo peace process.

24. Formal acknowledgement creates new options that are not conceivable during confrontation and polarized power struggle. As trust is rebuilt, both sides can become able to begin to embrace the other's views and concerns. Starting with affirmation of common higher goals and principles creates a solid guide to joint concessions being offered.

25. A US "take it or leave it and face consequences" approach cannot succeed with a nation (like Iran) that values its' history, reputation, equality, dignity, expectation of respect, and leadership role in the present and past. The hardline US expectation that Iran will/ "must" back down to avoid war is a misreading of Iran's view of its' situation.

26. Moderates in the West and Iran mistakenly assume that war will be avoided because of its' obvious destructive results to all parties (e.g. war will raise the price of oil and increase schism between Muslims and the West, the opposite of the West's preference).

27. Most world leaders say they prefer diplomacy to war involving Iran but what they propose along with the US will not replace the momentum to war, especially not in time before January.

28. The US is not prepared to help Israel fight, hence Israel has added the shock of nuclear threat to underscore it wants help desperately or much of the world will be affected by repercussions. *Israel adding the threat of nuclear war should be seen as a plea by Israel to the US and the world to shape an alternative to war if the US is not to join the war effort. Israel sees threat and war actions as its only choice. Others must see there are choices, and shape a negotiation.*

29. Conflict between the US and Iran, and Iran and Israel, and other core issues, are interconnected, which makes comprehensive change the necessary goal.

30. Hardliners can be expected to attempt to lead Americans to support Israeli attack and join in. US hardliners also have openly stated Iran should be attacked preemptively with nuclear weapons if necessary even before Israel has said it in US forums.

31. History shows that "incidents" blamed on "the other side" often occur when war is sought even by a few hardliners, which helps spur polarized hostilities and critics of war are ten easily silenced. Then there would be calls that it is unpatriotic (or in this case, also anti-Israel) to even consider a negotiation or dialogue with Iran. War has already become the only choice for Israelis, and it is already shaped by Israeli hardliners with assertions that to challenge the war option is "betrayal of Israel".

At the same time that Israelis have been discussing for months that war is all but assured, and while war is being prepared in Israel, an effort has been made in the US by moderates to propose that war is unlikely since it is harmful and difficult to accomplish. Without calls for negotiation by a majority of Americans, war that becomes nuclear in a large Muslim country, in the Middle of the Middle East, with vast amounts of oil, is becoming likely, a new degree of mistake not yet examined.

32. There is tragic irony that conflict between the US and Iran, and between Iran and Israel, developed in past decades by what most people recognize were mistakes of foreign policy. The US has never acknowledged with Iran those mistakes, nor sought to rectify the results with comprehensive negotiation.

33. Negotiating comprehensive change requires more US attention than is now being considered appropriate. The US has said "only one meeting" with Iran; that could only enable the US to make an ultimatum and depart, without exploring the many ways negotiation could be begun and built, e.g. starting with a pre-negotiation that embraces both sides.

34. Pre-negotiation can reduce the factor seen of "revenge" thinking among Iranian and Israelis where each side has people shaping policy who are willing to let many die to harm the other side.

35. Pre-negotiation can foster change between Iran and Israel, needed. President Ahmadinejad has repeated that Israel "should" (and will) be wiped off the map, but now he has also attempted to "take back threat" by restating that Israel will collapse

of its own accord rather than an Iranian action. Israel would not trust even a total change of President Ahmadinejad's hostile rhetoric, actions are needed. However, there is potential for change in evidence. The goal of comprehensive change would include a formal end of Iran's and Israel's counter threats (each sees the other as "causing").

36. Pre-negotiation mutual acknowledgements provide an "equalized step at the conceptual level", that also does not alter the status quo imbalance of power.

37. Pre-negotiation can begin a process of comprehensive change aimed to enable Iran to be a leader, equal among nations deserving respect, without Iran seeing a need to become a nuclear power, or to assert the "right" to uranium enrichment. (That right exists if a nation follows the NPT guidelines, which is in question for Iran). Pre-negotiation steps can acknowledge the "right" of a nation to uranium enrichment that is in accord with NPT rules and inspections, while Iran also puts aside that activity with focus on comprehensive change – that would amount to a grand bargain without overt trade of concessions.

38. *There is evidence that the risk of making peace is less than the risk of making war.*

39. Since each side sees the key to negotiation as depending on "the other side moving further first", simultaneous steps are needed starting with a form of approach like pre-negotiation, and in that context concessions sought by the US from Iran can be made along with focus on comprehensive change the US commits to with Iran. That would enable the parties to utilize the potential for change that does exist, by linking the antagonists at the level of common principle, common goals, and acknowledged differences.

40. Useful negotiation must offer more gain than loss for all the parties, at each step, rather than the US relying on a paternalistic coercive model that structures inevitable "resistance" from Iran, (even rebellion) since Iran's goal includes the equality and respect it believes it deserves the US has withheld since the Shah who the US imposed on Iran against the will of many of the people was overthrown.

41. The US has not yet made accommodation with Iran since the Shah was deposed by the people who abhorred his policies, dictatorial behavior, and "Savak" secret police, that ironically some experts have compared with Saddam Hussein's regime. The US armed Saddam to attack Iran's revolutionary government. The sequence of mistakes made in the Middle East are now compounding if nuclear war results. The US need not admit mistakes to avoid new mistakes. Negotiation that addresses the issues is essential, instead of threats leading to one choice, war.

Sincere Regards,
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Galeyn Remington

The author pioneered pre-negotiation in 1981- 82; is an unaffiliated neutral party; is a specialist in negotiation deadlock; has met "on-site" with leaders on both sides of 17 international and intra-national conflicts; has worked on other conflicts "off-site".

