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USADI Commentary

EU's "Soft Power Approach" Charade with Tehran

It is time for the EU's Big 3 to put an end to the diplomatic charade over Tehran's nuclear program.

In the tradition of European diplomacy, the futility of the long-going nuclear talks with Tehran is disguised in fancy, albeit, ambiguous phrases such as "soft power". While European diplomats are going out of their way to put a hopeful spin on the stalemated exercise by reserving their cheerleading only for the atmospherics of the talks, Tehran has been very frank and, for that matter, brazen, in its official positions.

With a great stake in securing lucrative commerce with Iran, the EU is hard at work to come up with an excuse to prolong the talks. In the meantime, the clerical regime has been emphatic about its intention to resume the uranium enrichment process currently said to be suspended.

Last Friday, a British Foreign Office spokesman told reporters, "The informal talks have concluded. No conclusions were reached and both sides, the EU Three and Iran, have agreed to go away and reflect on what was discussed and to continue the discussions in future."

The next day, Hassan Rowhani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, told reporters that Iran might resume uranium enrichment-related work this week.

One day of reflection on a meaningless talk did wonders.

Running out of excuses to prolong the talks, the EU now is balloon testing the idea of waiting until after the June 17 presidential elections in Iran. "We don't want to break things up now and have a row. We want to continue the negotiating process after the Iranian election," a European diplomat told the Associated Press last Friday.

Two days later, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei came back with a sharp and stinging response, totally rejecting the notion that after June elections Iran would consider making a deal with the European Union to abandon its nuclear program.

"The spokespersons of the arrogant power say they are waiting for Iran's elections to be carried out and then they will decide on the issue of peaceful nuclear energy in Iran. But what have Iran's elections got to do with you?" Khamenei retorted.

Clearly, Tehran is after extracting maximum incentives from the EU and Washington and prolonging the nuclear talks but not at the expense of disrupting its secret nuclear program.

Let's not forget that possessing nuclear weapons capability is a strategic component of the mullahs' calculus of survival. In tandem with other components such as sponsorship of terrorism, export of fundamentalism abroad, and continued crackdown on political dissent at home, it serves to shield the regime from increasing political vulnerability at home.

Furthermore, Iran seeks to gain strategic leverage in the region and beyond. When the most active state sponsor of terrorism joins the nuclear club, international terrorism wins. What is more, a nuclear-armed Iran would plunge the EU even deeper in the quagmire of appeasement.

The two years already wasted over fruitless negotiations with Tehran have only brought the world closer to the specter of a nuclear-armed terrorist regime in Iran.

Thank-you EU. Your "soft power" approach is working just fine.

Nearly two months have passed since the United States, under intense pressure by the EU and the Europeanists of the American foreign policy establishment, agreed to include two economic incentives for Tehran. Not surprisingly, they only served to embolden Tehran in its campaign of deception and denial.

With the mullahs remaining defiant, the EU must live up to the pledge it made to Washington to join the U.S. in referring Iran's case to the U.N. Security Council.

Washington meanwhile must resist intense diplomatic lobbying by the EU to push back the deadline for the talks from June to the autumn. This charade has lasted far too long to have any positive impact. **(USADI)**

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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Financial Times

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Iran nuclear threat increases transatlantic friction

Iran's threat to resume nuclear enrichment-related activities has led to more friction between the three European governments negotiating with Tehran and the Bush administration, which refuses to join the talks, diplomats said yesterday.

Nevertheless, the so-called EU3 of France, Germany and the UK are in broad agreement with Washington that they would refer the crisis to the United Nations Security Council if Iran renewed production of uranium hexafluoride gas.

Negotiations between Iran and the EU3 stalled last Friday in London. Last night, on the sidelines of a New York conference to review the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, Joschka Fischer, Germany's foreign minister, warned Kamal Kharrazi, his Iranian counterpart, of the repercussions of a possible Iranian decision to end its agreed freeze of enrichment-related activities.

But policy differences between the US and the EU3 emerged over the weekend in Washington. Senior European diplomats expressed their frustration to US officials over Washington's refusal to take part in the negotiations with Iran, saying they could make no headway. One US official said the Bush administration was concerned that the EU would not live up to its tough rhetoric and tackle Iran at the UN.

It is not clear if the western powers will seek to refer Iran immediately if the nuclear freeze is abandoned or wait several months until a new Iranian president is in place. At present the Europeans are reluctant to force the issue to a crisis, just weeks before Iranian presidential elections scheduled for June 17...

Frustrated with a lack of progress and what it sees as a deliberate EU attempt to string out the talks, Iran has threatened to resume nuclear activities this week... The EU agreed in March that it would respond to such a move by backing referral of the case to the Security Council. In exchange the US, for the first time, extended limited incentives to Iran, including the sale of aircraft parts and allowing discussion of Iran's bid to start accession talks at the World Trade Organisation...

But Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, has vehemently rejected any link between the country's elections and the nuclear talks. In a speech in Kerman on Sunday he denounced "spokesmen of the Arrogance" for saying "they would like to talk to Iran about the nuclear issue after the presidential election", and warned that the election was "nothing to do with them".

Iran Focus

May 1, 2005

Rafsanjani prevented from speaking on May Day in Iran

Tehran, May 01 – A packed Azadi Stadium in Tehran was today the scene of angry anti-government protests, forcing Iran's powerful ex-President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to call off his scheduled speech at the May Day gathering.

Eye witnesses said that some 20,000 workers gathered in and around the 12,000-seat stadium to mark May Day and chants of "The Majlis (parliament) betrays us, the leaders support them" could be heard throughout the crowd.

The event was originally organised by the government, however it soon became the scene of hostilities towards the regime's clerical rulers.

Rafsanjani, who is also the head of Iran's powerful State Expediency Council, was scheduled to speak at the event but was prevented by chants of "the servant's government should leave us alone" and "abolish slavery in Iran". Rafsanjani occasionally referred to his government as the servant's government.

One eye witnesses said that the crowd grew particularly incensed upon hearing the news that Rafsanjani was using the labourers' event as part of an election stunt.

A number of times, when the announcer spoke about Rafsanjani, the crowd started to boo. Many chanted "referendum, referendum, referendum, this what our people want".

Near the start of the event, Hossein Kamali, the former Minister of Labour, gave a speech after which mini sports matches were held aggravating many participants who said that they had come from long distances to let their voices be heard regarding the present situation of workers and were instead being offered "amusements to divert their attention".

Many workers registered their disapproval by parting the event. One group of workers near the top of the stadium continuously chanted slogans such as, "Don't let our voices turn into angry cries".

The area around the stadium was swarming with State Security Forces' patrol cars, ambulances, and fire engines.

Security agents arrested many of the protestors and mobile phone signals were jammed inside the stadium.

Similar protests occurred throughout the country, particularly in the capital. In Tehran's Jayhoon district May Day demonstrators clashed with security forces.