



Published on *The American Task Force on Palestine* (<http://www.americantaskforce.org>)

[Home](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#)

Israel Ever-Present at US-Iranian Negotiations

Media Mention of ATFP in Dar Al-Hayat - October 23, 2009 - 12:00am
<http://www.daralhayat.com/portalarticlendah/68960> [1]

Raghida Dergham

New York - The strategy of the two parallel tracks, based on incentives and threats, which has been adopted by the Barack Obama Administration is raising debate and discussion, as well as finding those who would challenge it, those who believe in its roots, those who fear for it and those who are wary of it falling like a gift onto the lap of the seasoned experts of procrastination, obstruction and maneuvers. This strategy, dubbed the dual strategy, represents the cornerstone of the Obama Administration's general foreign policy – clearly appearing in the way it is dealing with Iran, Sudan, Palestine, Israel and Afghanistan. It is a strategy that raises debate and anger among those who want the principle of justice and accountability to stand above all considerations, and especially those who had believed that there would be no compromising on justice in Darfur when President Barack Obama and his team arrived at the White House. Indeed, these people are disappointed by the dual strategy towards Sudan, which was revealed by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice this week, and in which they find a reward in advance for obstinacy. Others find ethical duality in the way the Obama Administration is handling the Goldstone Report, as the Administration immediately fled justice when it came close to reaching Israel. Yet there are also those who see in the dual strategy towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on the US President's personal pledge of insisting on finding a just solution, which hints to the possibility of removing the cover of automatic absolution from Israel. These people are waging a two-sided campaign against the Obama Administration, one opposing any strategy that tests the US-Israeli relationship in any way, and the other regarding the new US policy towards Iran, because it is seen as a dangerous risk, especially in its nuclear dimension. Nevertheless, there are those who adopt the opposite opinion towards the dual strategy when it comes to Iran, and they in turn are divided into numerous points of view. Russia for instance wants to encourage US rapprochement with Iran, but opposes adopting parallel tracks, one of them enticing and the other threatening with sanctions, as it sees no need for the stick since Iran is accepting the carrot. Others applaud the fact that the new US policy involves taking measures to prepare for sanctions, in parallel with constructive dialogue and engagement, and consider it wise. There are also those who consider the Barack Obama Administration to be naïve in offering various concessions in advance and without guarantees. Finally, there are those who wager on the efficacy of the

new method and consider that there is no other option anyway during this phase where America's affairs are being reorganized at the internal, foreign, political, military and economic levels equally.

Iran has started to delve deeper and to interact with this phase. What Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon, as well as Syria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, should do is rationally analyze Iran's strategy in response to that of the US and monitor its developments. Yet the national interest of any of these countries or parties lies not only in analyzing and discussing the strategies of others, but rather in positioning themselves as part of such strategies based on their own strategy, one that would be intelligent, practical, far-sighted and good at moving on more than one track towards an unknown fate or tunnel. Here are a few examples:

The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its customary worldly wisdom and skill, has ignored the "stick" of sanctions which the Obama Administration is working on formulating with international partners, and has resolved to make use of the "carrot" of dialogue to make of itself an authority and a partner at the same time.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki declaring this week that "Russia and America were enough" for the task of enriching Iranian uranium abroad and that Iran refuses to have France participate in talks provides far-reaching indications. Officially, what Mottaki said is that "France is not a party that can be trusted to supply Iran with fuel, in view of its inability to fulfill its commitments in the past", pointing to Paris's refusal to supply Tehran with nuclear fuel despite the fact that Iran has owned 10 percent of French uranium enriching company Eurodif since the days of the Shah.

The important political indication is represented by Iran's desire to be a regional superpower that only sits down with the United States and Russia under the sponsorship of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to reach an understanding over the steps of enrichment and beyond. Thus Tehran would have succeeded at keeping the nuclear issue in Vienna, where it has always wanted it to be, and under US-Russian-Iranian care, as this would bring it enormous political benefits, especially as it comes in the wake of an Administration that described Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil".

By this Tehran is saying: I am the proper destination; we understand the language of superpowers and are among the superpowers – at least at the regional level. It is noteworthy that Syria spoke in the same tone and language when it tried to exclude Lebanon from the discussion between Saudi Arabia and Syria, on the basis that the KSA and Syria speak the language of great powers in the region; both of them are great, and there is no need to "cram" a small issue or country like Lebanon into the discussions of great ones. But we will speak of this later in this article.

Noteworthy in the discussion between the US and Iran is the fact that Tehran wants to "warm up" bilateral relations with gradual steps, whereas Washington wants to "engage" with the aim of convincing Iran with an adequate explanation that would help it think of "calculating" details and complementarity in a different way. Indeed, the Obama Administration has laid an important foundation in its policy towards Iran, one based on ending the policy of "either or".

In other words, Washington wants to work with other countries to prepare tough sanctions to be imposed on Iran, in parallel with working with Iran in the framework of dialogue and negotiations. Russia does not approve of such a dual strategy and is opposed to applying this policy to Iran, as it considers that it implies an insult in advance and that there is no need for

threats in the age of dialogue and cooperation.

The Obama Administration may wish to reach a phase of détente with Iran, but it certainly does not behave as if it has entered into a relationship of détente with it. The nuclear issue is central of course, but they both want to discuss other issues at the dialogue table. The difference is that Tehran wants to address the various issues that make it a partner as the main country in the Middle East, like Israel or Turkey. The Obama Administration, on the other hand, wants to discuss issues that are broader than the nuclear issue, but has not defined or even addressed them yet. This goes back to either falling short due to lack of awareness or knowledge, or to fears of upsetting Iran in the early stages of dialogue.

Iraq is an important part of the discussion between the US and Iran. There may be an implicit agreement there, as some say, and there may be no need to wait for Iraq to be addressed officially at the dialogue table.

Israel may very well be ever-present in US-Iranian bilateral talks regarding the nuclear issue, especially as it threatens not to allow Iran to possess nuclear weapons, while Tehran responds by protesting the fact that Israel is not being punished for possessing unlawful nuclear weapons.

What is absent, however, and needs to be crammed into US-Iranian talks is the peace process to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, to which the US President pledged to give priority, considering that the ongoing conflict threatens the national interest of the US. Indeed, what is required should not necessarily be Iran's blessing of the peace process, but rather an American insistence on Iran ceasing to obstruct the peace process by using the suffering of the Palestinian to its own ends.

There is a clear US stance on the side of moderation and a clear message to the ranks of Palestinian moderation, one which President Barack Obama made sure to convey through his National Security Advisor James Jones to the American Task Force on Palestine (ATFP), headed by Dr. Ziad Asali, at the yearly dinner that gathered senior American and Arab-American officials. It is the message of building the Palestinian state and its institutions under the leadership of the Palestinian Authority to end the occupation through negotiations. Hamas, which Iran adopts supporting through various means, does not want negotiations as a means to end the occupation and build the state, and there are among its ranks today those who speak of reviving armed struggle to topple the Palestinian Authority, knowing that the capabilities of armed resistance are limited. Thus US-Iranian talks deserve for the Obama Administration to take the initiative of addressing the Palestinian issue there.

The Obama Administration should also take the initiative of addressing the issue of Lebanon with Iran and with Syria, and should insist upon it with both of them, no matter how much they want to keep it away from the negotiations table. The Obama Administration insists that it has not and will not strike deals with Iran or Syria at the expense of Lebanon, as it insists that it is not in its interest to improve relations with Syria by undermining the interests of a country which it defends, i.e. Lebanon. This entails an invalidation that contradicts what the Obama Administration wants, yet it is not enough, especially that the prevailing impression – or that which some are trying to promote – is that the US does not care about Lebanon.

Certainly there is bias in many US government and media sectors, particularly when it comes to the Palestinian-Israeli issue, and Israel is automatically protected from being held accountable and from being criticized, it is spared from punishment, and discussion into it is

smothered and repressed. Thus when Israeli journalist Amira Hass spoke in a tone of strong criticism and clear condemnation of Israeli policy before a gathering of American journalists at the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) lunch at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York, she both amazed and shocked those present. Indeed, her words coincided with attempts to contain discussion into the Goldstone Report, which stated that Israel and Hamas had both committed war crimes in Gaza, and possibly crimes against humanity.

The Obama Administration does not want to corner Israel, especially as the latter feels that it no longer enjoys absolute US protection. It considers that Goldstone did not resolve to issue a report that would cripple the peace process. It also considers that it is necessary not to submit to attempts by Israel, Hamas and others to undermine Palestinian partnership in negotiations through the campaign against President Mahmoud Abbas.

TAGS:

[Events](#) | [Daily News](#) | [About Us](#) | [Resources](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Donate](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[!\[\]\(e78f798d4ea5c530c9db49e7d26e6b95_img.jpg\) Front Page Features](#) [!\[\]\(034433b90593e82e5460e34e3ed48e9b_img.jpg\) World Press Roundup](#) [!\[\]\(5f24500834b50a8307ffe63e419281a9_img.jpg\) ATFP in the News](#) [!\[\]\(8502790a2fc8970abb55aa7f7a7a6bae_img.jpg\) Policy and Analysis](#)
[!\[\]\(7f7375e819602f97f5594a28879b3e09_img.jpg\) Briefing Summaries](#)

Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 8 2020 - 10:17pm*):

http://www.americantaskforce.org/in_media/mm/atfp/2009/10/23/1256270400

Links:

[1] <http://www.daralhayat.com/portalarticlendam/68960>