



May 8, 2012

Obama's Naïve Approach to Iran

Vice President Biden gave a speech today in which he [said](#) “we” (the United States) have been “the problem” on Iran. After three years of naivety in which Iran’s nuclear program has advanced, the Obama Administration chooses to apologize for America.

In April, Iran met once again with the permanent five members of the U.N. Security Council (United States, Britain, China, France, and Russia) plus Germany, known as the P5+1, to continue talks over its nuclear program. The most tangible progress to come out of those discussions was an agreement to another discussion on May 23.

Secretary of State Clinton recently [said](#) these negotiations “are really getting down to testing whether or not there is a willingness on the part of the Iranians to reach some kind of negotiated resolution.” President Obama has offered Iran “the promise of a new beginning” since he entered office. The perspective from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) shows how Iran has rejected these overtures, saying in its most recent report: there are “serious concerns” about Iran’s nuclear weapons activities.

- **First Test:** President Obama’s first test of Iran came in his Inaugural Address, where he said to Iran: “We will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.” This promise was made manifest in the two letters he [reportedly](#) sent to Iran’s Supreme Leader in 2009.
- **First Failure:** President Obama publicly [announced](#) in September 2009 Iran had for years been building a covert uranium enrichment facility. French President Sarkozy called it “a direct violation of resolutions from the Security Council and from the IAEA.” U.K. Prime Minister Brown said Iran had been engaged in “serial deception” over its nuclear program.
- **Next Test:** Undeterred, the international community cobbled together a proposal in October 2009, known as a “fuel swap,” under which Iran would transfer much of its low-enriched uranium out of the country, and uranium enriched to higher levels of purity would be returned to Iran—ostensibly for medical uses.
- **Next Failure:** Iran announced in February 2010 it was enriching uranium to even higher levels of purity, thereby bringing it even closer to a nuclear weapons capability.

- **Continued Failure:** The IAEA released a [report](#) in November 2011 outlining in extensive detail the information that gave rise to its “serious concerns” about the possible military nature of Iran’s nuclear program. In a section entitled “possible military dimensions,” the report reads: “Since 2002, the Agency has become increasingly concerned about the possible existence in Iran of undisclosed nuclear related activities involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile.” Like all reports prior to it, this one continued to find that “[c]ontrary to the relevant resolutions of the Board of Governors and the Security Council, Iran has not suspended its [uranium] enrichment related activities.” This report also discussed how Iran was installing more advanced centrifuges, which could significantly increase the rate of Iran’s production of enriched uranium. [In summary](#), the “IAEA reports demonstrate Iran’s production of enriched uranium continues to accelerate.”
- **The Obama Administration Policy Has Failed:** President Obama’s own Director of National Intelligence testified earlier this year it “is precisely the intelligence community view or assessment that to this point, the sanctions as imposed so far have not caused [Iran] to change their behavior or their policy.” Even the Washington [Post](#) editorialized last year about the Iran sanctions regime: “it’s important to note a stubborn reality: There has been no change in Iran’s drive for nuclear weapons or in its aggressive efforts to drive the United States out of the Middle East. If anything, Tehran has recently grown bolder.”

Secretary Clinton noted, “what came out of the first meeting [with Iran in April] was a commitment to a second meeting,” which will take place this month. History makes clear what can be expected at these negotiations. As a 2009 Bipartisan Policy Center [report](#) assessed: Iran “will make minor diplomatic gestures in order to forestall the possibility of tougher measures and disrupt any international resolve.” Iran is buying time to allow its nuclear program to continue, and the Obama Administration is going along.