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## Obama launches diplomacy with Tehran after quietly accepting Iran's current nuclear capabilities

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Barack Obama announces diplomacy with Iran

Iranian President Rouhani conspicuously avoided shaking the hand President Barack Obama extended to his government at the UN Tuesday, Sept. 24, by absenting himself from the UN reception for world readers. He made this gesture under strong international spotlight to underscore the value Iran places on being respected as an equal in the negotiations ahead with the United States, Iranian sources stress.

Although his words were relatively mild for an Iranian revolutionary, Rouhani nonetheless made no concessions on Tehran's

fundamentals: "Acceptance of and respect for implementation of the right to enrichment inside Iran and enjoyment of other related nuclear rights provides "the only path to the framework to manage our differences."

Obama knew the "handshake rebuff" was coming, yet he went through with his announcement of direct engagement with Iran earlier Tuesday. To give his rhetoric weight, he demonstratively instructed Secretary of State John Kerry to take charge of the pursuit of "face to face negotiations" with Tehran.

The link Obama made in his speech between the Iranian and Palestinians negotiating processes as the two focal issues of his Middle East policy was further embodied by his appointment of the same official, John Kerry, to take charge of both tracks. This has placed Israel at a disadvantage on both fronts.

Kerry finds the Iranian track in good shape. It has been secretly active for the past two months between president Obama and Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Rouhani, as first revealed by debkafile. Oman's Sultan Qaboos was their go-between.

The Secretary of State wins a flying start from the four points of agreement they have already reached:

1. Iran's nuclear capabilities will be preserved in their present state. Tehran has already pocketed respect for its right to enrich uranium and keep back in the country all accumulated stocks, including the quantities enriched to the 20 percent level (a short hop to weaponised grade).
2. Tehran accepts a cap on the number of centrifuges enriching uranium at the Natanz facility. The exact number has not been decided.

The number of machines for enriching uranium to 5 percent is still at issue. There are no restrictions on centrifuges generating a lower level of purity.

Discussions on this point have not been finalized, since Washington wants to limit the number of advanced IR2 and IR1 centrifuges in operation and Tehran is holding out against this,

3. Iran will sign the Additional Protocol of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty-NPT, which allows International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to make unannounced visits outside

declared nuclear sites, when they are suspected of carrying out banned operations.

It will also allow the IAEA to install cameras in the chambers where the centrifuges are spinning and not just the areas where the enriched uranium is deposited.

Here too, it is not clear whether Tehran will also stipulated that Israel sign the same article and permit inspections of its reputed nuclear sites.

4. The US and European Union will gradually lift all sanctions.

The linkage President Obama made between the Iranian and Palestinian negotiating tracks is puzzling:

Does it imply that the more land Israel gives up on the West Bank for a Palestinian state, the more heavily he will lean on Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program?

Was the president suggesting that if Israel is ready to evacuate settlements and reach a land swap deal with the Palestinians, he will be all the more ready to use force to preempt a nuclear-armed Iran?

If that is the president's thinking, he is giving the Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, by accepting or rejecting the extent of Israeli concessions, the power to determine the endgame of US nuclear negotiations with Iran.

Does that make sense?

Obama's interconnection of the two issues, if that can be extrapolated from his words, is self defeating: It would allow Tehran to carry on with its nuclear weapons program while spouting more pacific slogans to the American public and Binyamin Netanyahu to refuse to pull Israel out of substantial areas in Judea and Samaria, while advising the Palestinians to be satisfied with the control they have over seven West Bank cities and their economic autonomy.

Buried under the verbal avalanche produced in two days of UN business, was a major diplomatic concession tossed by Obama at Iran's feet: His call on the UN Security Council to enforce Syria's compliance with the international ban on chemical weapons as a major challenge to the international community.

First he shunted the Syrian chemical issue aside by relegating to the US Congress a decision on limited US military intervention. He then put it on the table for a US-Russian deal in Geneva; and finally he has passed it on to the UN. The Russians have made it clear that they will block any Security Council measures that would hold Syria to account for non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons ban.

So the buck-passing has reached a dead end and Iran's ally Bashar Assad is off the hook for using poison gas against his own people.

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