

P5+1 MEETING: REMARKABLE CHANGE IN TONE FROM DIPLOMATS AND PRESS

Laura Rozen chose a particularly appropriate title for her post yesterday on the P5+1 meeting just concluded in Geneva: "US and Iran Speak 'Same Language' in Nuclear Talks". Not only were the negotiations carried out in English for the first time, but all sides report that a new tone was present and that the pathway to substantial progress has been laid out:

Western and Iranian diplomats hailed a new pace, candor and mutual will to try to forge a process to resolve international concerns about Iran's nuclear program, but acknowledged they were at the beginning of a still complex and difficult negotiation whose success is not guaranteed.

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"I have never had such intense, detailed, straight-forward, candid conversations with the Iran delegation before," the American official said. "The discussions took place in English...the pace of discussions was much better. It creates the ability to have a back and forth."

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"Both sides are serious, both sides want to find common ground," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, speaking in English, told journalists at a press conference at the conclusion of talks here. "Iran is interested in resolving this issue."

A very important statement from Zarif at the

press conference was picked up by CNN:

"We will be doing the negotiation in the negotiating room and not in the press," Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif told reporters after the talks concluded.

The decision to keep details of the negotiations secret (which is apparently endorsed by all sides in the negotiations since few details beyond Iran being willing to submit to the IAEA's Additional Protocol have emerged) is significant not just for the room it provides negotiators. Keeping the details secret also makes the path much harder for those on the outside who prefer a violent regime change in Iran rather than a negotiated path to peace.

I have remarked in many of my posts on the Iranian nuclear technology issue that "diplomats" in Vienna have a long history of leaking what they claim to be incriminating evidence against Iran to reporters there, primarily George Jahn of AP (look at the pretty cartoon!) and sometimes Fredrik Dahl of Reuters. Joby Warrick at the Washington Post often chimes in with information leaked from his sources who also seem to prefer a violent path. The intelligence is often embellished by David Albright and his Institute for Science and International Security. While there have been improvements lately by Jahn and Dahl in questioning the material leaked to them and providing alternative information available from other sources, much damage has been done to the diplomatic pathway by this process.

Remarkably, there is little to no pushback so far from this group to the progress made in Geneva. A story co-authored by Jahn late yesterday afternoon fits with most of the reporting on the meeting and his single quote from an unnamed source is innocuous:

A senior U.S. official said that while the six powers "got more today than

we've ever gotten, there's a whole lot more that we need to get and probably more that Iran wants to get from us. ... There's a lot of detail that needs to be unpacked." The official demanded anonymity as a condition for attendance at a background briefing.

Dahl also has no disruptive quotes in the several Reuters stories to which he contributed. Completing their shutout from the trio of their usual helpers, the hawks planted no inflammatory language in Joby Warrick's story in today's Washington Post. The David Albright pathway to propaganda also hasn't been activated, as the most recent post on his site at the time of this writing was dated October 3.

The dogs that aren't barking now are the most encouraging sign of all that there is widespread optimism that diplomacy has a real chance of succeeding.