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Iran's Nuclear Program: A Challenge to the World

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Iran's Nuclear Weapons Ambitions

The United States and Libya, together with countries across the world, are faced by a common challenge: the nuclear weapons ambitions of the leaders of Iran.

Iran's nuclear program has been under the close scrutiny of the International Atomic Energy Agency for the last several years. Last September, following three years of intensive investigation, the IAEA made two important findings:

- first, that Iran had violated its safeguards obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty; and
 - second, that Iran had lost the world's confidence in the peaceful nature of its program.
- In February, the IAEA reported these findings to the UN Security Council.

The IAEA and the Security Council have called on Iran to cooperate in resolving troubling questions about its nuclear program. They have also called on Iran to refrain from activities to enrich uranium and produce plutonium. These activities are not necessary for a peaceful nuclear energy program. These activities are necessary to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Iran has failed to heed these international calls.

- Instead of suspending uranium enrichment, Iran is running a 164-centrifuge cascade and has announced plans to assemble more.
- Instead of halting work on a heavy water reactor that will produce plutonium, Iran is forging ahead with construction.
- Instead of granting IAEA requests for greater access, Iran has limited where inspectors can go, rejected experienced inspectors, and refused Agency requests to upgrade monitoring capabilities.
- Instead of answering IAEA questions, Iran has stonewalled. Iran has failed to satisfy IAEA concerns about ties to the A.Q. Khan network, an illicit market for nuclear weapons technology. Iran has failed to meet the IAEA's request to turn over a document from the A.Q. Khan network on fabricating components for nuclear weapons. Iran has failed to explain apparent connections between Iran's uranium conversion activities and the design of a missile warhead.

We expect a new report by IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei on August 31. His last report was sparing in words but stark in content:

- Iran continued to withhold cooperation with the IAEA on almost every outstanding issue.
- Iran was not implementing any of the confidence-building measures requested by the IAEA Board and now made mandatory by the UN Security Council.

It's hard to imagine the new report to be much different.

No one disputes the right of Iran to a peaceful nuclear energy program in conformity with its rights and obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But Iran's program makes no sense from a civil perspective.

- Iran's leaders say they need the heavy water research reactor to produce medical isotopes. But why this large investment when an existing research reactor remains underutilized?
- Iran's leaders claim they need enriched uranium for nuclear power plants. But Iran has no nuclear power plants. The one under construction at Bushehr will receive fuel from Russia.
- Iran's leaders claim they need the capability to enrich uranium to be self-sufficient. But Iran's limited reserves of natural uranium are not sufficient for energy independence. Iran announced plans to build seven 1,000-megawatt nuclear power reactors. Even considering speculative reserves -- reserves that may exist, but have not been discovered -- Iran could only fuel this program for a few years after the last reactor is built. At that point Iran would run out of its own uranium, and still need to procure fuel on the international market.

Compare Iran to Sweden and Finland. Sweden gets 40 percent of its electricity from nuclear power.

Finland gets 16 percent and is building a new reactor. Both are advanced countries, with state-of-the-art technology. Neither enriches uranium. Instead, both find it advantageous, like 15 other nuclear energy countries to procure their fuel on the world market.

The programs and actions of Iran's leaders are not consistent with a peaceful program. But they are consistent with a deliberate, step-by-step effort, to acquire the knowledge, technology, and material to build nuclear weapons. Indeed, it is our judgment, that Iran's leaders have made the strategic decision to undertake such an effort to acquire nuclear weapons.

Iran is also deploying systems capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Iran is building and deploying the Shahab-3 missile, a system derived in part from North Korea's No-Dong missile. The Shahab-3 can strike most of the Middle East.

Iran has also admitted to working on a longer-range missile. According to some reports, this missile could strike parts of Europe, Africa, India, Russia, and China.

The Threat Posed by Iran

The pursuit of nuclear weapons by the dangerous leaders in Tehran threatens Iran's neighbors and threatens the wider world community. Iran is already the world's most active sponsor of terror. Iran is a principal founder and supporter of Hezbollah, the terrorist group which recently launched missile attacks on Israel from an illegal sanctuary in Lebanon. Iran has provided Hezbollah with funding, safe haven, training, and weapons. It has publicly encouraged Hezbollah's violence and attacks.

Iran is a major source of instability in a region that is already volatile. Countries across the world support a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. Iran is the only country whose leadership opposes this vision for a lasting peace. Instead, Iran's President has called for Israel to be wiped off the map. He most recently threatened Israel with a "horrible destiny."

While publicly supporting the new government in Iraq, Iran's leaders have provided weapons and training to Shia militia. Sophisticated bomb making material from Iran has been found in Iraq in the road-side explosives killing civilians and coalition forces.

Imagine that same leadership, dangerous and defiant, armed with nuclear weapons.

- A nuclear-armed Iran could embolden its leaders to advance their ambitions across the Middle East, whether with the military forces they are building or the terrorists they train and equip.
- A nuclear-armed Iran could pose an even greater threat to Middle East peace, including the very existence of Israel.
- A nuclear-armed Iran could cause neighboring countries to re-evaluate their nonproliferation commitments. This could spark a nuclear arms race in one of the world's most volatile regions. This could shred the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a cornerstone of international peace and security.

Pursuing a Diplomatic Solution

Our goal is to secure a diplomatic solution, one in which the leaders in Tehran give up their pursuit of nuclear weapons and take credible steps to assure the world that their nuclear program is solely peaceful.

With that goal in mind, we have worked with Europe, Russia, China, and other like-minded countries to present Iran's leaders with a clear choice. The negative choice is for Iran's leaders to maintain their present course, ignoring international concerns and international obligations.

If Iran's leadership makes this choice, the Islamic Republic will only incur great costs and lost opportunities. The positive choice, the constructive choice, the choice that would most benefit the Iranian people, is for Iran's leaders to alter their present course and to cooperate in resolving the nuclear issue.

This must start by Iran meeting IAEA and Security Council requests to suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing, including research and development. These activities, once pursued covertly, and now in contravention of Security Council requirements, are not necessary for Iran to enjoy the benefits of civil nuclear power. But they are a necessary step in mastering the technology and acquiring the material and know-how to produce weapons-grade material.

Dr. EBaradei cannot certify that Iran's activities are peaceful, and more and more countries suspect they are not. This is why our two countries called for suspension, why the IAEA required suspension, and why the Security Council has now mandated suspension.

Iran suspending its activities to enrich uranium and produce plutonium would allow the Security Council to suspend its action. And Iran suspending these activities would allow the France, Germany, and the UK, joined by the United States and others, to open negotiations for a long-term agreement.

To provide the basis for such an agreement, a far-reaching package endorsed by Foreign Ministers of the three European countries, Russia, China and the United States was presented to Iran on June 6. It offers substantial economic, political, and technological incentives for the Islamic Republic.

In the nuclear field, these include: reaffirmation of Iran's right to nuclear energy in conformity with its obligations under the NPT; willingness on the part of EURATOM, the European nuclear agency, to negotiate and implement a cooperation agreement with Iran; active support for the building of new light-water power reactors in Iran through international joint projects, using state-of-the-art technology; and legally-binding assurances of a fuel supply for nuclear reactors.

The package also opens the prospect for political dialogue and economic cooperation beyond the nuclear field. This includes: cooperation related to the promotion of regional security; assistance to improve Iran's access to the international economy; cooperation on civil aviation; and support for the modernization of Iran's telecommunications.

By suspending the activities that give the world such concern, and negotiating constructively on the basis of this offer, Iran's leaders have the opportunity to promote the well-being and security of the Iranian people.

On July 31, after waiting six week's for Iran's reply, and receiving none, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1696. This tough resolution makes crystal clear the choice facing Iran's leaders.

In the words of Ambassador John Bolton: "they can either take up the very generous offer that the five permanent members and Germany have extended to them, and if they do, there's a possibility of a different

relationship with the United States and others. But if they don't, we've also make it clear that their unwillingness to give up their pursuit of nuclear weapons will results in our efforts in the Security Council to obtain economic sanctions against them."

Earlier this week, Iranian authorities delivered their response to the six-country proposals. They called the response "multi-faceted." However, to our dismay, a key facet seems to be missing: compliance with the Security Council's suspension requirements.

We are evaluating Iran's response and are waiting for the Director General's report. If Iran has not shown serious intent to negotiate or to meet Security Council requirements, the Security Council will need to act.

Libya's Role

Libya has an important role to play in securing a diplomatic solution. Libya's voice is respected on the IAEA Board, in the Middle East, and among developing countries. Your leadership has set a positive example by foregoing a prohibited weapons program in exchange for international engagement and respect.

Libya's example and leadership position you to help Iran's leaders to think hard about Iran's future and to consider two different models:

- the first, North Korea – nuclear-armed but impoverished, isolated, insignificant;
- the second, Libya – respectful of its international obligations and, for that reason, respected by the international community.

The choice for Iran should be clear. Libya can help Iran's leaders make the right one.

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