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USADI Commentary

How to Counter Mullahs' Nuclear Calculus

By rejecting the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) latest resolution, Iran's clerical regime has escalated the nuclear brinkmanship it has waged on the world since revelations about its secret nuclear facilities in August of 2002. Now the question facing Washington and the European Union is whether they have the resolve - and the sense of urgency - to take this issue to the UN Security Council immediately and not let Tehran off the hook with its blatant defiance.

"We will not abide by the IAEA's resolution," insisted Iran's Atomic Energy Organization chief when meeting IAEA's Director General earlier this week. He told the reporters that Iran had already started converting 37 tons of raw uranium to yellow cake, which is used for enrichment of uranium.

In the ominous nuclear calculus of the terrorist mullahs, the EU capitals are seen as spineless and too interested in business and Washington as too busy with the presidential elections to consider any major shift in how to deal with Iran's nuclear challenge.

Given the urgency of situation, however, Washington can ill afford to wait until after November election to address this matter. According to some credible estimates, Iran is only months away from the nuclear point of no return.

In formulating a viable solution to the mullahs' nuclear challenge, the United States must take into account the following:

1- Having a nuclear arsenal is at the heart of Iran's foreign policy doctrine. Iran has been seeking political and military regional hegemony - a cornerstone of the Khomeini's vision for an Islamic Empire - since 1979.

2- The root cause of the nuclear crisis with Iran, similar to its sponsorship of terrorism, export of fundamentalism to Iraq and beyond, and crackdown on political dissent at home, is the depraved nature of the fundamentalist terrorist regime in Tehran, rendering it incapable of embarking on the path to reform.

3- Formulating policies based on the notion that the mullahs' abide by their international obligations, is an exercise in futility. No amount of negotiations and incentives would dissuade the mullahs from their ominous strategic goals.

4- Diplomatic engagement, and all of its aliases such as "grand bargain" and "direct dialogue," must therefore be thrown out the door. The EU's diplomatic initiative to strike a nuclear deal with Iran last fall proved to be a dismal failure.

5- Policy suggestions based on the fact that Iran's nuclear threat and its sponsorship of terror could be halted once and for all only through a regime change by Iranians and their democratic opposition groups, offer the only viable solution.

6- Unlike its neighbors to the east and west, Iran has a century-long history of relentless struggle against despotism. The call for regime change in Iran goes back to more than two decades. Tens of thousands of Iranian democracy activists have been sent to the gallows and thousands more have languished in Iran's prisons.

7- That said, any meaningful option on Iran must by necessity include reaching out to Iranian democratic and anti-fundamentalist opposition groups who have been fighting for a secular and representative government for the past quarter century. We must help create a better balance of power between the regime and its opposition.

8- Given their lucrative trade with Tehran and geopolitical jockeying in the region, the EU countries have self-serving reasons for their "soft approach" toward Tehran. However, the specter of a nuclear-armed Iran - the most active state sponsor of terrorism - is far too ominous to let appeasers in the EU dictate the policy toward Tehran.

9- Referring Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN's Security Council and imposing sanctions against the regime are major steps forward but may not be enough, given the speed and extent of Iran's nuclear program and the UN's lethargic bureaucracy.

10- Tehran rulers are betting that Iraq-fatigue and the presidential elections in the U.S. will dissuade Washington from appropriate and timely measures to halt their drive. They are also banking on the trans-Atlantic divide as to how to deal with their nuclear campaign. The mullahs must be proven wrong.

Only when Washington grasps fully the sheer extent of the destructive and multi-faceted threat Iran poses to the well-being of Iranians and to the security and stability of the region, would it realize that the call of Iranians for a regime change must be heeded and the door to engagement must be shut.

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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The Times (of London) Editorial September 22, 2004

Ticking Bomb: A Determined Response Must Halt Iran's Nuclear Plans

... By announcing that it has embarked on a process that will lead to uranium enrichment, and thus the material for an atomic arsenal, Iran has, in effect, said "no" to further co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). ...

Still, the Iranian Government has decided to defy the IAEA openly and risk the consequences.

They have done so after making the calculation that the possible consequences will not be very serious. Iran's original willingness to work with the IAEA was not born of unilateral charity but was the result of explicit political pressure.

The US-led intervention in Iraq concentrated minds in Iran. It was evident that there would be a high price to pay if Iran's nuclear ambitions were realized. Even the most fanatical sections of the Iranian regime did not want to force a political showdown with the White House. The situation has evolved and Iran has become bolder. The tragic aftermath of the conflict in Iraq has absorbed Washington's attention. These difficulties have been stoked from and through Iran itself, with hundreds of heavily armed "volunteers" crossing a virtually unpoliceable border every day.

The final stretch of the American presidential contest also makes it harder for Washington to focus on Iran and European nations have realized that Tehran has taken advantage of their willingness to compromise in negotiations.

The regional and international implications of a nuclear Iran are profound and grave. It would be much tougher to deal with an actual nuclear power than an aspiring one. The inner politics of this regime are complex, but to put faith in moderates to act in a responsible fashion has not worked. It is just not clear how much influence they have on the regime or whether, on this issue, they disagree with the hardliners.

It would be far better if the international community resolved to oblige Iran to fall into line with the IAEA. The divide between the United States and the EU on policy towards Tehran has managed to enable the regime there to play one side off against the other. A united and determined stance is what is required for a diplomatic initiative to be anything more than merely wishful thinking.

It is now time for the UN Security Council finally to address this matter and to make it clear what the sanctions will be if the IAEA ultimatum is disregarded.

This may well, alas, be the very last chance left to prevent Iran from becoming a dangerous nuclear power.

New York Sun September 20, 2004

Rosenberg Logic and Iran

Are France, Germany, and the United Kingdom willing to allow Iran to build a nuclear weapon? This is a fair question considering that these three countries, which have tried for more than a year to cajole the Islamic republic into assuring the world it is not building an atomic bomb, are now unwilling to attach any consequences to their latest deadline of November for the Iranians to come clean.

Last week at Vienna the Europeans tried to make the case that Iran be given until the end of October ... This position was defensible a year ago, when the International Atomic Energy Agency was just finishing up inspections of the facilities the Iranians had kept hidden from the international community for at least 15 years. A year later it's insanity.

The latest report from the IAEA, which has been misreported as containing no smoking gun, provides much proof that Iran has negotiated in bad faith. For example, the Iranians have yet to supply the IAEA with information on where it actually got certain equipment, such as magnets for its P-2 centrifuges...

Despite such unanswered questions, the IAEA has yet to make any judgments with regard to Iran's nuclear activities. The IAEA's director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, remains agnostic. "Have we seen any proof of a weapons program? Have we seen undeclared enrichment?" he asked Tuesday. "Obviously until today there is none of that," added he: "But are we in a position to say that everything is peaceful? Obviously we are not at this stage."

It's worth asking Mr. ElBaradei and the Europeans pushing for more negotiations exactly what more proof they need. The reason the IAEA is even considering this issue, after all, is that the mullahs for years failed to tell the atomic watchdog that it built an enormous underground centrifuge at Natanz, that it was conducting laser enrichment experiments at numerous other facilities, and that it had imported yellow cake uranium from China.

Why would one of the world's leading exporters of petroleum take such pains to hide a peaceful nuclear energy program from the rest of the world? Why is the IAEA bending over backward to ignore nearly two years of delays, false reports, and obstruction to see what's in front of its nose? ...

Instead of defying reality and pretending that Iran is not building a nuclear bomb, the world would be better served were the British, French, and Germans to devote their energies aiding the most potent opponents of Tehran's clerics - the Iranian people.