

Iran's Nuclear Program and the UN Security Council's Sanctions Regime

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Almost five years have passed since the United Nations Security Council imposed its first round of sanctions against Iran over the allegations that Tehran might be moving toward developing nuclear weapons. Since that time, four rounds of devastating sanctions have been imposed on Iran by the Security Council and several European nations, Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea and other countries joined the march of imposing sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program.

Many resources indicate that Iran's nuclear program was initiated by the United States in 1950s as part of a program named Atoms for Peace. "Atoms for Peace" was a title given to a speech by the former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower before the UN General Assembly on December 8, 1952. Following this speech in which President Eisenhower alluded to his experience as a military man and stressed the necessity of paying especial attention to the use of nuclear energy in the 20th century, the U.S. government launched a program called Atoms for Peace and pledged financial and scientific help and support for hospitals, schools, universities, scientific centers and research institution, seeking to carry out studies on nuclear energy. This program helped Iran and Pakistan build their first nuclear reactors in 1950s.

In line with their policy of empowering the client states, the United States and its European allies supported, financed, backed and advanced Iran's nuclear program until the Islamic Revolution of 1979 overthrew the U.S.-installed Shah of Iran and brought to power the Islamic Republic which was from the beginning of its inception a thorn in the side of the United States and its European cronies.

Right after the beginning of Iran's new era under the leadership of Imam Khomeini, the U.S. and Western nations started to take an aggressive stance against Iran and set in motion their irrational animosity with a country which had proclaimed its decision to be a defender of the subjugated and an enemy of the oppressors and hegemonic powers.

The West began to create hurdles and impediments on Iran's way toward self-sufficiency. Iran sought to extricate itself from the manacles of the U.S. and its cronies. When Mohammad Reza Pahlavi fled Iran, the country was practically in the hands of American and British consultants and advisors. Imam Khomeini's movement was a popular uprising against the de facto occupation of Iran by the United States and Britain and this was extremely unfavorable and bitter for the White House. They provoked Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to wage a war against Iran in the high hopes that a heavy military expedition would paralyze Iran and bring the Islamic Republic to its knees. They promised Saddam that they would help him financially and militarily; however, after an 8 year war of attrition which cost

the lives of more than 500,000 Iranians, and after several diplomatic, underground operations to topple the government in Iran, the American statesmen realized that the Islamic Republic was too powerful and determined to be defeated easily. It was when the financial sanctions and soft war commenced.

Holding back Iran's nuclear program was on the high agenda of the United States. They knew that the theological mindset of the Iranian leaders would keep them away from planning to produce nuclear weapons, and at the same time, they knew that their close allies in Europe and Israel possess hundreds of nuclear warheads; however, their main objective was to hamper Iran's scientific progress and slowing down Iran's movement toward the zeniths of success and glory.

After years of psychological propaganda against Iran and introducing the people of Iran as an uncultured, uncivilized and terrorist nation, the U.S. and Europe joined the anti-Iranian terrorist organization MKO, which is notorious for the killing of more than 40,000 civilians, to stage a charade against Tehran and accuse it of developing nuclear weapons. They were too quick in their moves and for the first step, publicized forged documents and materials which allegedly showed that Iran is developing weapons of mass destruction and atomic weapons. The first step was taken by Alireza Jafarzadeh, a spokesperson for the MKO terrorist organization who claimed in 2002 that he accessed documents, revealing that Iran has clandestine nuclear facilities in Natanz and Arak. The Western media swiftly picked up the story and aggrandized it to the extent of an international concern which involved the whole world, including the numerous enemies of Iran in Europe and the Northern America. The story continued as IAEA stated its decision to send inspectors to Iran to investigate Iran's nuclear facilities. The atomic watchdog demanded that Iran cease uranium enrichment and all of the research activities related to uranium enrichment and then start negotiations with the five permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany and resolve the crisis diplomatically.

Although Iran was one of the first world countries to ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 and had the legal right of enriching uranium under the comprehensive safeguards of the IAEA, it has been discriminatorily pressured by the U.S. and its allies to suspend its nuclear activities since 2003.

On October 21, 2003, and in league with the governments of France, the UK and Germany (called EU-3), Iran declared that it would suspend uranium enrichment voluntarily and sign and implement an Additional Protocol as a confidence-building measure and freeze its enrichment and reprocessing activities during the course of talks with the P5+1.

Interestingly enough, following Iran's voluntary suspension of uranium enrichment, IAEA issued antagonistic reports, claiming that Iran did not fully cooperate with the inspectors and that it failed to submit regular reports of its activities in the Natanz and 40 MW heavy-water reactor in Arak. Despite all this, Iran continued its suspension of uranium enrichment until 2006 when it decided to open the seals of the nuclear facilities and resume uranium enrichment in compliance with the IAEA regulations. The IAEA inspectors were allowed to travel to Iran several times a year and look into Iran's nuclear activities. It's an undeniable reality that no country in the world has been so cooperative with IAEA as Iran has been.

The U.S. and EU, however, retained their unwarranted hostility towards Iran and during a period of 5 years, they imposed harsh sanctions on Iran which targeted the country's

economy and adversely affected the daily life of the ordinary citizens. These multilateral and unilateral sanctions include travel restrictions, ban on the sale of electronic devices and apparatus, restriction of transaction with Iranian companies and cartels, trade embargo on Iran's medical sector and other variations of restrictions which have been exceptionally devastative and damaging.

The U.S. and its European allies keep refraining from selling aircraft to Iran and hundreds of people die every year on account of the country's aging fleet of aircraft. They have also imposed sanctions on Iran's oil and gas sector in which thousands of Iranians and their families are involved. Iranians are unable to buy the basic commodities of their daily life as a result of the sanctions imposed on the country. This is while the U.S. and European states shamelessly boast of their being concerned about the Iranian people and on every occasion, try to reach out to the Iranian citizens whom they claim are oppressed by the government.

It is a certainty that the nuclear program of Iran and regarding it with a suspicious eye have been hyped up by the Western governments and that has to be seen as part of U.S. ploy to demonize the Islamic republic in the world. This animosity is not however something new but an old sore which the US keeps rubbing. The enmity, as Ron Paul reaffirms, goes back to the advent of the Islamic revolution and even further beyond, "We've been at war in Iran for a lot longer than '79. We started it in 1953 when we sent in a coup, installed the shah. And the reaction, the blowback, came in 1979. It's been going on and on because we just plain don't mind our own business. That's our problem."

There is indeed much ado about Iran's nuclear program and despite all evidence that Iran is not pursuing a clandestine nuclear weapons program, the US keeps piling accusations on the country. Who knows? Maybe Iran's nuclear program is only an excuse for the U.S. government to start another war in the region.

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