

Iran and the G20 meeting: Creating a Crisis to Cover Divisions

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The G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh gathered the finance ministers, top bankers and political leaders of the world's largest economies, ostensibly to take up the most serious economic collapse of capitalism in three generations. Instead, they attacked Iran.

Without proposing measures to ameliorate the suffering of the hundreds of millions of workers who have lost their jobs, without announcing jobs programs or infrastructure construction, U.S., British and French imperialism joined together with bombast to threaten Iran on totally fabricated charges. They have demanded that the United Nations Security Council and members of the G-20 collaborate on a new round of sanctions against Iran.

Emergency economic proposals were not even on the agenda.

In a theatrical press conference on Sept. 25, flanked by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel delayed but on her way, President Barack Obama declared that Iran was threatening the stability and security of the region and the world. Refusal to "come clean," he said, "is going to lead to confrontation."

Sarkozy and Brown denounced Iran and explicitly demanded harder sanctions.

They threatened a military strike, saying that "all options are on the table with regard to Iran."

This whole scenario shows that these bankers, finance ministers and politicians have no solutions for the crisis wracking the globe. They used the summit to justify the bailout of the banks and to give vague assurances of future economic recovery. The trillions of dollars handed over to the banks is the greatest redistribution of national treasuries in human history.

Unable to reach agreement on regulating international banking, trade or any aspect of international finance capital, which has spread chaos through the entire world, the imperialists gave the appearance of unified purpose by making ominous threats against Iran. All the corporate media loyally fell in line. No journalists dared to ask about the havoc arising from the capitalist economic system or what solutions the imperialists proposed. All the media snapped to attention and joined in demonizing Iran.

Iran in full compliance

In the face of such an onslaught of war propaganda, it is important to review the facts.

Iran is fully in compliance with all international agreements, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and International Atomic Energy Agency guidelines and reporting regulations. The IAEA is the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agency.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty guarantees all nations the right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. According to IAEA reports, Iran is enriching uranium to less than 5 percent. At this level of purity, the uranium is useful for peaceful nuclear-based electricity generation but is well below the 90-percent U-235 needed for nuclear weapons. Iran possesses no facility with that capacity. (www.iaea.org)

Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltaniyeh, told Press TV on Sept. 27 that IAEA safeguard agreements call for nations to inform it of the existence of a new enrichment plant at least six months or 180 days before the introduction of nuclear materials into the facility. Iran notified the IAEA on Sept. 21, which is 18 months in advance.

This second, smaller facility outside Qom, Iran, is an empty building. It has no nuclear material at this time and no equipment for enrichment has been installed yet. The small-scale site is meant to house no more than 3,000 centrifuges—many fewer than the 8,000 machines at Natanz, Iran's other enrichment facility.

"It is a very ordinary facility in the beginning stages" and 18 months away from operation, President Ahmadinejad said at a Sept. 25 news conference in New York. "It is not a secret facility. If it was, why did we inform the IAEA ahead of time? ... What we did was completely legal, according to the law," the Iranian president said. "We have informed the agency, the agency will come and take a look and produce a report, and it's nothing new."

The Iranians also said that the facility was hardly clandestine. Nor is it a surprise, as U.S., Britain and France have claimed. These same countries also state that they have known about it for three years. Both the U.S. and the French have presented aerial photos of the construction, and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton acknowledged that the U.S. knew of the plant before Iran reported it.

Is Iran really a threat?

The U.S. still has thousands of nuclear weapons. It is the only country that has ever used a nuclear weapon and the only country that has time and again threatened to use nuclear weapons. The U.S. refused to abide by the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the U.S. Congress has never ratified it.

Israel clearly has uranium enrichment facilities and is estimated to possess 60 to 400 thermonuclear weapons. Israel refuses to abide by any international agreements or any inspections. Yet every U.S. administration has been completely silent on Israel's nuclear enrichment and weapons program.

Thirteen countries presently enrich uranium. Argentina, Brazil, South Africa and Australia have also announced plans to begin enriching uranium. Twenty-eight countries have nuclear energy plants, with the largest number of power plants being in the U.S. Another 10 countries without plants have plans to build one. Yet only Iran and North Korea are ever challenged or threatened.

Iran has consistently supported the creation of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle

East and proposed the concept in a joint resolution in the U.N. General Assembly.

IAEA and Iran

Iran has not only agreed to more stringent IAEA inspections than other nations, it has also offered to operate the uranium enrichment facility at Natanz as a multinational fuel center with the participation of foreign representatives. Iran has further renounced plutonium reprocessing and agreed to immediately fabricate all enriched uranium into reactor fuel rods. This offer by Iran to open its uranium enrichment program to foreign private and public participation follows suggestions of an IAEA expert committee.

Despite all these agreements, Washington has insisted that Iran must totally suspend its entire enrichment program.

The IAEA released its own statement on Sept. 17, saying, "With respect to a recent media report, the IAEA reiterates that it has no concrete proof that there is or has been a nuclear weapon program in Iran."

The September-October issue of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists publishes an interview with IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei. In the course of the interview he declared: "We have not seen concrete evidence that Tehran has an ongoing nuclear weapons program. ... But somehow, many people are talking about how Iran's nuclear program is the greatest threat to the world. ... In many ways, I think the threat has been hyped." These authoritative statements and words of caution are totally ignored by the wild circus of the imperialist media.

Around the world the imperialist countries are isolated on this issue. On Sept. 16, 2006, in Havana, Cuba, all the 118 Non-Aligned Movement member countries, at the summit level, declared their support of Iran's civilian nuclear program in their final written statement. The Non-Aligned Movement represents a majority of the 192 countries in the U.N.

Again on July 30, 2008, the Non-Aligned Movement welcomed the continuing cooperation of Iran with the IAEA and reaffirmed Iran's right to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. The movement further called for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and called for a comprehensive multilaterally negotiated instrument which prohibits threats of attacks on nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

In February 2007, lawmakers from 56 member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, addressing Iran's nuclear program at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, urged "full respect for equal and inalienable rights for all nations to explore modern technologies including nuclear energy for peaceful purposes."

Sanctions — A weapon against development

Iranian spokespeople have made it clear that Iran will develop its own facilities to enrich uranium for energy. It has been subject to the most severe series of sanctions and export restrictions on technology for peaceful nuclear technology and for all other forms of development. After decades of violated agreements, contracts and treaties, Iran cannot trust the U.S. or Europe to consistently provide the nuclear energy fuel to run power plants.

The U.S. provided aid to Iran's original nuclear development during the years of brutal dictatorship of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. At that time Washington was more than

willing to give Iran nuclear technology. But after the 1979 Iranian Revolution overthrew this U.S.-imposed dictatorship and reasserted national control over Iran's own oil and gas resources, Washington ended all nuclear cooperation. Since then the U.S. has taken every possible measure to sabotage, strangle and overthrow the Iranian government.

The latest U.S. and European discussion of a blockade of refined gasoline to Iran is just the latest example of efforts to stop Iran's development.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates discussed ways to harm Iran: "There are a variety of options still available, including sanctions on banking, particularly sanctions on equipment and technology for their oil and gas industry. ... I think there's a pretty rich list to pick from." (bloomberg.com, Sept. 27)

Washington has used enormous pressure several times to impose economic sanctions through the U.N. Security Council. These sanctions are a form of strangulation, an intentionally brutal weapon applied to developing countries. Sanctions exacerbate social tensions and undercut the support for a targeted government by creating economic havoc. Wildly spiraling, uncontrolled inflation, shortages, long lines, shutting off imports of basic supplies and closing off export markets impact harshly on the most defenseless sectors in every society. Currencies become worthless. Industries are forced to shut down.

Over the last five decades in an effort to extract concessions, different forms of U.S. sanctions have been used against the poorest countries of the planet. They have targeted nine countries in Africa, six countries in Asia, five in the Middle East, three in Latin America and three in Europe.

On Oct. 1 a meeting called the "5 + 1" for the five-member U.N. Security Council plus Germany is scheduled to meet with Iran on its nuclear energy program. The threats restated at the G-20 meeting aim to coerce Iran to accept extremely intrusive controls.

Remember that under U.S. pressure in August 1990, the U.N. Security Council imposed a total blockade on Iraq. The blockade resulted in the deaths of more than 1 million children under the age of 5 from the resulting desperate shortages and preventable diseases. Meanwhile, a hunt for supposedly secret weapons of mass destruction dragged on for 13 years.

In 2003 the Bush administration claimed that Iraq had a secret nuclear weapons program close to completion and posing an imminent nuclear threat. A media frenzy claimed that Iraq was close to producing nuclear weapons. This fear of weapons of mass destruction-WMD-became the main justification for the U.S. invasion and occupation.

All reports from the IAEA confirming that there was no evidence of such a program were ignored. No such weapons were ever found. But after six years of U.S. occupation, a quarter of Iraq's population is dead, disabled or dispersed in the form of dislocated refugees.

Washington's lies must be exposed. Iran's sovereignty and its right to full development must be defended and supported.

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