



National Iranian American Council

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IAEA-IRAN COOPERATION ACCENTUATES POLITICAL NATURE OF NUCLEAR DISPUTE

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) November 2007 report on Iran was much anticipated because of the agreement on a work plan regarding a time frame for the resolution of "outstanding issues" that had remained regarding Iran's past activities.

Based on this agreement Iran was expected to cooperate and divulge information that would allow the IAEA to assess whether Iran has come clean on its past activities. This process is still ongoing with IAEA director El Baradei on record as saying that Iran's agreement with the agency "is proceeding according to schedule."

The IAEA and its director were criticized by the United States and several European governments for the work plan because of its focus on Iran's past activities and the possibility of the resolution of the questions regarding these past activities undercutting the force of the UN sanctions regime that demands

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suspension of Iran's enrichment program. As such, the report issued had to be, and is, very clear that "contrary to the decisions of the Security Council, Iran has not suspended its enrichment related activities."

The IAEA report also states that "since early 2006 [when Iran suspended its voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol due to UN Security Council initiated sanctions against Iran], the Agency has not received the type of information that Iran had previously been providing, pursuant the Additional Protocol and as a transparency measure. As result, the Agency's knowledge about Iran's current programme is diminishing."

However, despite the concern about the Agency's "diminish-

ing" knowledge and despite the impression given in the American media about the report raising "new doubts" on Iran's nuclear program (NYT, 16 November 2007) or faulting "Iran's input" (WP, 15 November 2007), on the remaining major issues relevant to the scope and nature of Iran's nuclear program, the report paints a cooperative picture of Iran and in effect suggests that a major change in Iran's cooperation has occurred. Most significantly, it states, "The Agency has been able to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran. Iran has provided the Agency with access to declared nuclear material, and has provided the required nuclear accountancy reports in connection with declared nuclear material and activities." This revelation of no evidence of diversion to a weapons program, which essentially means that Iran is still in compliance with its NPT safeguards agreement, comes despite "a total of seven unan-

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nounced inspections" carried out which are beyond Iran's current NPT obligations.

The report is also explicit that "Iran has provided sufficient access to individuals and has responded in a timely manner to questions and provided clarifications and amplifications on issues raised in the context of the work plan. However its cooperation has been reactive rather than proactive." This means that Iran has responded to questions and cooperated in specific areas when asked but not before. The IAEA clearly wants Iran to engage in "active cooperation and full transparency" in a proactive manner but the report does not state that Iran's "reactive" approach has led to lack of cooperation as agreed upon in the work plan or lack of the Agency's knowledge of all aspects of Iran's nuclear program.

In fact, on specific issues of concern, the report suggests that all of the 266 tons of uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) "remain under agency's containment and surveillance"; "no indication of any UF₆ reconversion and casting activity" was found; and "there was no indication of ongoing reprocessing related activities" at several sites under monitoring.

The Agency report also includes new details on the history of Iran's nuclear program. Regarding P-1 centrifuges and their purchase, it concludes that "information provided by Iran on these purchases and

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the quantities is consistent with the Agency's findings."

On research and development activities with the more advanced P-2 centrifuges, the report finds Iran's statements as "consistent with information available" and states that "environmental samples taken at declared R&D locations and from equipment did not indicate that nuclear material was used in these experiments."

The Iranian leaders have taken these statements to mean closure of the P-1 P2 issues but the report's statement that the Agency "will continue to seek corroboration and is continuing to verify the completeness of Iran's declarations" suggests otherwise as the Agency turns its "attention in the next few weeks to contamination issue as well as alleged studies and other activities that could have military applications."

Nevertheless, despite these ambiguities there are no doubts in the report about Iran's cooperation and important steps forward. In short, a close reading of the report suggests that

while the IAEA is unhappy with Iran's continuation of enrichment (because it is contrary to the Security Council decisions) and would like Iran to voluntarily implement the Additional Protocol as it did in the past, it is satisfied with the substantial progress on past activities and Iran's cooperation, which is continuing on schedule.

This substantial progress has been made possible not through "selective cooperation" as suggested by the United States representative to the IAEA, Gregory Schulte but through substantial cooperation that is making possible the resolution of outstanding issues that were the basis for the referral of Iran's case to the Security Council.

This does not mean that the resolution of these outstanding issues will make the Security Council demands on Iran to halt enrichment and heavy water-related moot as these demands are presented as confidence-building measures irrespective of the underlying issues that eventually brought about the Security Council referral. But the resolution of these outstanding issues will accentuate the essentially political requirements, rather than the technical verification of Iran's peaceful intent, for the resolution of Iran's case.

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