

accordance with the earlier formulation in itself constitutes non-compliance' with the NPT. (Document leaked to Dr Jeffrey Lewis, ArmsControlWonk blog, 13 March 2009 <tinyurl.com/jnv262>)

WHERE NOW?

One alternative to sanctions and war is uranium enrichment in Iran, in facilities owned and managed by an international consortium. Former British ambassador Sir John Thomson: 'it is the best that is obtainable, and so long as it remains in force it precludes Iran from making a nuclear weapon'. (*Independent*, 13 July 2008 <tinyurl.com/jnv266>)

Thomas Pickering, former US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs: consortium 'combined with upgraded international safeguards and inspections will provide an unprecedented level of transparency about Iran's production of nuclear fuel.' (*New York Review of Books*, 20 Mar. 2008 <tinyurl.com/jnv267>)

The consortium has been public Iranian government policy since 18 Sept. 2005, when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told the UN General Assembly Iran was 'prepared to engage in serious partnership with private and public sectors of other countries in the implementation of uranium enrichment program in Iran'. (BBC, <tinyurl.com/jnv263>)

In 2007, Javad Zarif, Iran's ambassador to the UN, suggested: 'Iran could agree that its nuclear facilities, including all of its enrichment plants, could be jointly owned by an international consortium. All countries with concerns, including the US, could participate in that consortium. Their people and other foreign nationals could come and go to work at the facilities, which would allow for the best type of monitoring.' (*Time*, 14 Mar. 2007 <tinyurl.com/jnv264>)

Iran's willingness was reiterated in a 13 May 2008 letter to the UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon calling for enrichment consortia 'including in Iran'. (*Guardian*, 23 May 2008 <tinyurl.com/jnv265>)

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LAST CHANCE FOR IRAN?

The Site At Qom & The International Consortium Solution

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IRAQ BACKS DOWN

On 1 Oct., Iran startled the world by making two dramatic concessions in the long-standing crisis over its uranium enrichment programme, 'agreeing to admit inspectors to a newly revealed nuclear plant and to surrender some of its enriched uranium to be processed abroad, a concession which could delay or at least complicate its [suspected] efforts to acquire a nuclear bomb.' (*Independent*, 2 Oct., p. 1)

The concessions came at talks held in Geneva between Iran and the P5+1 (the permanent five members of the UN Security Council – Britain, China, France, Russia and the US – and Germany).

Iran had been very belligerent before the meeting. Ali Akbar Salehi, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Agency, said: 'We are not going to discuss anything related to our nuclear rights'. (*Telegraph*, 30 Sept., p. 15) Iran also increased the political temperature by test-firing missiles including the 1,240-mile-range Shahab-3 missile (which could hit Israel and US bases in the Gulf), just days before the Geneva talks. (*FT*, 29 Sept., p. 8) Two Iranian MPs, Mohammad Karamirad and Hassan Ghafourifard warned Iran could leave the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). (Reuters, 30 Sept., <<http://tinyurl.com/jnv255>>)

The *Telegraph* reported the day before the Geneva talks: 'Western diplomats are pessimistic about the chances of any positive outcome.' (30 Sept., p. 15) In mid-September, the US 'reluctantly accepted an offer from Iran of face-to-face negotiations'. (*Telegraph*, 14 Sept., p. 20)

This led to the 40-minute one-on-one meeting between Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Sayeed Jalili, and US diplomat, William Burns, in Geneva on 1 Oct., 'the highest level diplomatic



meeting between the two countries in almost three decades', which cemented the Iranian concessions. (*Telegraph*, 2 Oct., p. 20)

THE URANIUM

As part of this deal, Iran has agreed 'in principle' to hand over 1,200kg out of its stockpile of 1,500kg low-enriched uranium (LEU) for further enrichment into fuel rods in Russia and France ('experts believe it would require about 2,400kg to make a weapon'). 'The material will then be exported back to a research reactor in Tehran to meet an urgent Iranian need for isotopes for hospitals and medical applications' (*Independent*, 2 Oct., p. 2)

'People familiar with the issue said the process [of turning the 5LEU into 20% enriched fuel rods] would make it extremely difficult for Iran to use the uranium for bomb-making purposes', which requires 90% enriched uranium. (*Telegraph*, 2 Oct., p. 20)

THE SECRET SITE

'Those involved [in the Geneva negotiations] said that last week's public unveiling of the underground plant at Qom was the game-changer – not just for Iran, but also for Russia, which made it clear that it was unimpressed by being lied to.' (*Times*, 2 Oct., p. 49)

The Qom site has been under satellite surveillance since 2006, apparently. 'Working with their British and French counterparts, [US intelligence] compiled a detailed picture of what was being built there, with information from an Iranian nuclear scientist's smuggled laptop, defectors and satellite imagery.' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 27 Sept., p. 23)

'The intelligence was said to have been gained through compromising Iran's computer network and seizing a journal containing detailed notes.' (*Telegraph*, 26 Sept., p. 17)

'By late spring, US officials realised the Iranians knew security had been breached. Obama ordered a detailed dossier that he could use in negotiations or, if need be, in enlisting the co-operation of other nations in sanctions against Iran.' Russia and China were not informed until late September, however, after Iran had written a letter about the site to the IAEA. (*Sunday Times*, 27 Sept., p. 23)

President Obama has said that the 'size and configuration of this facility is inconsistent with a peaceful programme'. (*Telegraph*, 26

Sept., p. 16) The *Guardian* comments: 'It is far too many [centrifuges] for a pilot plant [normally 164 centrifuges], which is what Iran claims it is building. On the other hand, 3,000 centrifuges are not nearly enough for a civilian power programme.' 3,000 is the right number to produce one warhead every year, however. (*Guardian*, 26 Sept., p. 4)

'It is not clear how western intelligence came to the conclusion that the Qom plant was big enough for 3,000 centrifuges.' (*Guardian*, 26 Sept., p. 4) The actual size of the Qom plant will be confirmed shortly by an IAEA inspection.

Even if the purpose of the Qom site is military, which is far from proven, international monitoring can stop Iran from trying to acquire a nuclear bomb without warning the international community.

THE WRONG SIDE OF THE LAW?

President Obama said, in relation to the fact that the Qom enrichment facility had not been declared earlier: 'Iran is breaking rules that all nations must follow.' (*Telegraph*, 26 Sept., p. 16) Wrong.

Not 'all nations' are signed up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). 'All nations' don't have to follow NPT rules. Secondly, even all nations that have signed up to the NPT don't have to follow the special 'modified Code 3.1' rules that require early disclosure.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, said at the end of Sept., that Iran was 'on the wrong side of the law' on the secret site because 'Iran was supposed to inform us on the day it was decided to construct the facility.' (*Times*, 1 Oct., p. 40)

It's true that Iran did sign up to the 'modified Code 3.1' disclosure rules ElBaradei describes – on 26 Feb. 2003 – but it later withdrew from this commitment (formally in a letter delivered to the IAEA on 13 April 2007).

The IAEA says Iran is still bound by 'modified Code 3.1' rules, because Tehran is not allowed to change the arrangements unilaterally. But Iran might nevertheless be acting legally. Iran says it is operating under the previous rules, and disclosing information about nuclear facilities 180 days before nuclear materials enter them.

The IAEA's own Legal Adviser has pointed out that the unmodified, looser, rules were accepted for 22 years before being changed, so 'it is difficult to conclude that providing information in