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Clinton Pressures China to Toughen Iran Sanctions

VOA News reported on January 29 that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton — who was in Paris meeting with senior French officials — said that China is under pressure to join in new sanctions against Iran over Tehran's refusal to reveal details of its nuclear-fuel enrichment program. Iran has consistently denied that it is developing nuclear weapons.



Clinton said that she and other diplomats who favor additional sanctions on Iran for refusing to meet Western demands for more transparency in conducting its nuclear program are lobbying China to back new UN sanctions against Iran. "China will be under a lot of pressure to recognize the destabilizing effect that a nuclear-armed Iran would have" in the Persian Gulf, "from which they receive a significant percentage of their oil supply," the *New York Times* quoted Clinton as saying in her address at École Militaire, a French war college.

"We understand that right now it seems counterproductive to you to sanction a country from which you get so much of the natural resources your growing economy needs. But think about the longer-term implications," the *Los Angeles Times* reported Clinton as also saying.

The Secretary of State noted the risks that would result from a nuclear-armed Iran in response to a question from the audience: "It will produce an arms race" in the Persian Gulf, and Israel will feel its very existence threatened, said Clinton. "All of that is incredibly dangerous."

"As we move away from the engagement track, which has not produced the result that some had hoped for, and move forward on the pressure and sanctions track, China will be under a lot of pressure to recognize the destabilizing impact that a nuclear-armed Iran would have in the Gulf," Clinton stated during her Paris visit.

Most members of the UN Security Council, including Britain, France, Russia, the United States, and Germany, have favored a tough stand against Iran. But China has been the lone exception, calling sanctions counterproductive and harmful to efforts to persuade Iran to substantiate its claim that its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes. China, which has been a permanent Security Council member since it replaced the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan at the UN in 1971, possess the veto power that comes with that position, and could block a move to impose more sanctions.

Reuters news service reported that French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told reporters, following a meeting with Clinton, that Russia's position on sanctions was not troublesome. "We are very pleased



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with the position taken by our Russian friends and we are still working with our Chinese friends," said Kouchner.

A [commentary](#) posted at antiwar.com on January 29 speculated: "China's reported plans to veto additional sanctions against Iran may irk the US, but as permanent members of the security council there is little the US can ultimately do about them. Secretary Clinton's comments may in fact push China even further into opposition of the sanctions, as any support they gave it now would be seen as capitulation to US demands."

The position taken by the United States and other Western powers is that the nuclear-fuel enrichment program currently being conducted by Iran may not be for peaceful purposes, as Iran maintains. Iran may actually be in the process of enriching uranium to a level high enough to produce nuclear weapons. Once having done so, the argument follows, Iran will become a major threat to peace in the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Though this scenario may be speculative, it would be prudent for any of Iran's neighbors who might be threatened by an Iran with nuclear capabilities to maintain military arsenals sufficient to have a deterrent effect on Iran — similar to the strong nuclear arsenal the United States maintained during its Cold War with the old Soviet Union. In response to what is perceived as an increased threat level from Iran, the United States, the *New York Times* reported on February 1, has accelerated its deployment of Aegis-equipped warships and other missile defenses around Iran.

"Iran is clearly seen as a very serious threat by those on the other side of the Gulf front, and indeed, it has been a catalyst for the implementation of the architecture that we envision and have now been trying to implement," the *Los Angeles Times* quoted U.S. Central Command head Gen. David Petraeus.

As to why the United States is responsible for defending the entire Middle East against Iran is an interesting question. Perhaps it is because the United States was responsible for removing the only force in the region strong enough to wrestle Iran to its knees — the Iraqi military apparatus once commanded by Saddam Hussein. Iran and Iraq engaged in a large-scale war from September 22, 1980 through August 20, 1988, and the two sides were so evenly matched that half a million Iraqi and Iranian soldiers died in the conflict until both sides exhausted their human and other resources to continue. The conflict ended in stalemate.

Saddam Hussein may have been an insufferable bully, but sometimes it is better if two bullies have each other to keep occupied and in check, so they ignore their weaker neighbors. U.S. meddling, as it usually does, upset the balance of power in the region.

But if our role in the Middle East was a blunder, pressuring China — of all nations — to adhere to sanctions against Iran, is ludicrous. Which nation is the greater threat to world peace? Iran, a nation of 75 million people headed by a fanatical (but still God-fearing) regime, has about 945,000 active military personnel, and a small arsenal of missiles, the most advanced of which, the Sajjil 2, has a potential range of 1,200 miles. As noted, Iran's war with Iraq essentially ended in a draw, whereas, U.S. forces rolled over Iraq with about as much opposition as the Germans received from little Belgium during World War II.

As for China, it is the world's most populous nation, with about 1.3 billion people, its army has 2.3 million active troops, the world's largest, and is in possession of a formidable nuclear arsenal and (unlike Iran) has workable delivery systems for those weapons. According to a July 2004 report from the Center for Defense Information (CDI):



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Though the exact size of China's nuclear arsenal is unknown, current best estimates are that China has about 280 strategic weapons, and a smaller number — about 120 — of tactical weapons. The weapons are based on ICBMs and strategic bombers, with a naval component under research.

China has also acquired and improved upon the Russian S-300 surface-to-air missile systems, which are considered to be among the best aircraft-intercepting systems in the world.

The question remains: Given the vast difference in each nation's military-strike capabilities, why is *Iran* perceived as the greater threat — against which we are soliciting China's help?

Is it because China has a long track record as a peace-loving nation, a bastion of freedom and human rights, and a candidate for a universal good-neighbor award?

Anyone familiar with the history of the communist regime that captured mainland China under Mao Tse tung in the early 1950s and its successor regimes knows that communist rule has brought death to an estimated 60,000,000 Chinese. Nor is the harm done by Chinese communism entirely domestic. It also supported the aggression of North Korea and North Vietnam in two wars against the United States and its allies, and brought death to over one million Tibetans.

Even more pertinent to any consideration of enlisting China's help to sanction Iran is that for many years, China has been a the leading weapons supplier of nations associated with terrorism (including *Iran*, Syria, and North Korea) and has assisted so-called Islamist (but in reality, communist) terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

Iran is but another whipping boy among many used by our State Department in its long history of covering up for the *real* source of terrorism in the world — openly communist China and "formerly" communist Russia.

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