With Iran accord, US shifts tactics, not predatory aims

Keith Jones
16 January 2014

On January 20, a six-month agreement rolling back Iran's civilian nuclear program will come into force. US President Barack Obama claims that Washington has joined with its European allies, Russia and China to negotiate this interim agreement because the US, having repeatedly threatened Iran with military force, now wants to "give peace a chance."

US imperialism is trying "peace" only as a tactic in its pursuit of definite strategic aims, which it may well in the end seek to realize through war. Washington views the threat of US military action, which still hangs over Iran, as essential in pressing for deep and permanent concessions.

The diplomatic turn to talks with Iran, since Washington pulled back from an attack on Syria last September, has been driven by two predatory calculations. First, that yet another US war in the Middle East would dangerously detract from the "pivot to Asia," that is, from efforts to isolate and militarily confront China.

Second, that Iran's bourgeois rulers can be harnessed to US strategic interests, its oil industry and wealth re-divided for the benefit of US corporations, and its strategic position used to stabilize the Middle East—from Lebanon to Afghanistan—under US hegemony.

With the interim nuclear agreement, Washington has extorted sweeping concessions from Iran. These provisions trample on Iran's rights both as a sovereign state and as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The deal restricts Iranian uranium enrichment to less than 5 percent, eliminates half of Iran's 20 percent-enriched uranium, blocks Tehran from activating its Arak heavy-water reactor, and subjects the country's civilian nuclear program to intrusive inspections of an unprecedented nature.

In exchange, the US and its EU allies are to give Iran some $7 billion in "reversible sanctions relief." That amount—$7 billion—is what the sanctions cost Iran in lost oil imports in just six weeks! Moreover, the key sanctions—those that have halved Iran's oil exports and frozen the country out of the world banking system—remain in full force.

These sanctions are among the harshest ever imposed outside war. They are themselves an act of aggression, disproportionately targeting the most oppressed sections of Iranian society. The sanctions have devastated Iran's economy, slashed state revenues, and fueled 40 percent inflation and massive job losses. They have cost thousands of lives by blocking the import of pharmaceuticals and other medical supplies.

Washington's Iran policy is of a piece with the sectarian war it has waged through its Sunni Islamist proxies in Syria—a point Washington underscored by ratcheting up its campaign for regime-change in Syria as its deal with Iran was made public.

On Monday, the Obama administration announced that it would exclude Iran from the upcoming conference on the war in Syria. Tehran would be invited, US Secretary of State John Kerry said, only if it agreed that the conference would transfer power in Damascus to a "transitional government" in which US-sponsored Islamist insurgents would have half the seats.

At the same time, Washington provocatively stepped up its military aid to its Syrian proxies. The Obama administration reportedly views the likelihood that its aid will go to Al Qaeda groups and lead to terrorist "blowback" in the US as acceptable "collateral damage" of its war drive in Syria.

The current interim agreement with Iran is supposed to set the stage for talks on a "final" agreement

© World Socialist Web Site

delimiting Iran's nuclear program—although, as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran is supposed to have the unfettered right to a full-cycle civilian nuclear program.

Obama and Kerry have already declared that these talks will be "far tougher" than those that led to the interim agreement, with the US president publicly proclaiming a "50-50" chance they will fail. Failure, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney declared Monday, "would result in action by the United States"—that is, harsher sanctions and a countdown to war.

For the US, the nuclear issue has always been a pretext to bully and isolate Iran and lay the political groundwork for regime-change, pursued militarily if necessary. In the final analysis, American imperialism has never reconciled itself to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which overthrew the brutal dictatorship of its client, the Shah.

The Iranian Revolution was a mighty anti-imperialist upsurge. However, the Stalinist Tudeh Party and assorted petty-bourgeois "left" groups systematically subordinated the working class to the national bourgeoisie, insisting that Iran was not ready for socialism. Exploiting this breathing room provided to it, the bourgeoisie used Ayatollah Khomeini's nationalist-clerical regime to harness the mass movement, then brutally suppress the left and stamp out all expressions of working class power and self-organization.

For 35 years, the rulers of the Islamic Republic have declaimed against US imperialism. But their opposition has always been two-faced, rooted in their resentment over the limits imperialist domination places on the Iranian bourgeoisie's own ability to exploit the working class.

Time and again, the Iranian regime has sought an accommodation with Washington. In 2001, Tehran provided Washington with intelligence as the US invaded Afghanistan, and helped the Bush administration install Hamid Karzai as its puppet ruler in Kabul. In 2003, Tehran proposed a "grand bargain" in which it would recognize the state of Israel and cut off support to Israel's main military opponents in the region: the Palestinian group Hamas and the Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah.

In seeking an accommodation with Washington, the Iranian bourgeoisie is seeking to accelerate pro-market reforms and eliminate what remains of the social concessions made to the working class after the Revolution. What is emerging is an explosive confrontation of the working class throughout the Middle East against the neo-colonial intrigue of the imperialist powers.

As the interim nuclear deal was being finalized, Tehran announced that Iranian President Hassan Rouhani would travel to next week's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he will woo the Western business and political elite. His government has already rolled out the red carpet for US and EU energy giants, offering them privileged access to Iran's massive oil and natural gas reserves.

The only force that can consistently oppose imperialism and prevent it from plunging humanity into new wars even more devastating than the world wars of the last century is the international working class, mobilized on the basis of a revolutionary socialist program.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site