

Iran belongs to world's "nuclear club" cleric – www.news.yahoo.com

May 7/10. TEHRAN (Reuters) – Iran has entered the world's "nuclear club" and major powers should accept it, an influential cleric told worshippers on Friday, underlining Tehran's defiance in a dispute with the West over its atomic activities.

Ahmad Khatami, a conservative hard-liner in the clerical establishment, also warned the major powers that Iran could "endanger your entire world" in any future confrontation.

The United States is lobbying U.N. Security Council members to back a fourth round of sanctions on Iran, to press it into curbing sensitive nuclear work the West suspects is aimed at making bombs.

Iran, the world's fifth-largest crude exporter, says its nuclear program is aimed at generating electricity and has refused to bow to international pressure to halt it.

"In regard to the nuclear issue, you should regard the nuclearization of Iran as a bygone fact," said Khatami, who is a member of a powerful clerical body, the Assembly of Experts.

"By God's grace, Iran has entered the world countries' nuclear club," said in a sermon broadcast live on state radio.

The United States and Israel, Iran's arch foes, have not ruled out military action if diplomacy fails to resolve the row.

Iran, a predominantly Shi'ite Muslim state, has said it would respond to any attack by targeting U.S. interests in the region and Israel, as well as closing the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway crucial for global oil supplies.

Addressing the six world powers which are now discussing a possible new round of sanctions on Iran -- the United States, Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia -- Khatami said:

"If you should want to stand up against this religious (Islamic) system you would be standing up against the religion of God, and if you should want to confront our religion we will endanger your entire world."

Khatami praised President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's attendance at this week's start of the month-long review conference of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Tehran and Washington accuse each other of violating.

In his May 3 speech at U.N. headquarters in New York, Ahmadinejad urged the United Nations to punish countries like the United States that threaten to use nuclear arms.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton dismissed Ahmadinejad's comments as the "same tired, false and sometimes wild accusations," and she urged nations to focus on efforts to bring Iran to heel over its nuclear program.

"Our president took part in this conference with full courage and intelligence," Khatami said. "If anyone wants to see how effective this trip was they should look at the indignation of the arrogant powers."

<http://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/-/world/7192633/iran-belongs-to-worlds-nuclear-club-cleric/>

Obama, Egypt strategizing for nuke-free Israel – www.worldtribune.com

WASHINGTON — Egypt and the United States have sought to draft a joint proposal for a Middle East free of nuclear weapons.

Officials and analysts said President Barack Obama has approved efforts of a joint resolution as a means of pressuring Israel to give up its purported nuclear arsenal. They said the resolution was not meant against Iran, which has denied a nuclear weapons program.

"The president is not happy with Israel's nuclear capabilities," former U.S. envoy to the United Nations, John Bolton, said. "I think he would be delighted if Israel gave up its nuclear weapons."

In an interview on May 4 on Israel Army radio, Bolton said Obama's predecessor, George Bush, refused to work with Egypt or any other country for a so-called nuclear-free Middle East. Israel has refused to confirm or deny reports that it possesses nuclear weapons.

"Egypt and the Obama administration are negotiating right now on an Egyptian proposal for a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East, which certainly sounds good," Bolton, who served as Bush's leading nonproliferation official, said. "Except when you think about it, there is only one country that resolution is targeted at and that is Israel."

"When I was in the Bush administration we refused to even talk about these kinds of ideas," Bolton said. "I'd be quite worried about the possible outcome there."

Over the last 40 years, the United States has unofficially adopted Israel's refusal to discuss its purported nuclear arsenal. Israel has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty until peace comes to the Middle East.

The United Nations has hosted a month-long meeting on NPT. The session has been dominated by Egypt's recruitment of a bloc to press for the implementation of a 1995 resolution for a nuclear-free Middle East.

"We want to see every country be a signatory to the NPT," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on May 3. "We believe strongly in this. That's why we are taking steps which have never been taken by any administration before."

Israel has become the focus of attention at the NPT meeting, sponsored by the International Atomic Energy Agency. IAEA director-general Yukiya Amano has asked member-states to propose ways to press Israel to join NPT.

"It would be helpful to me if Your Excellency could inform me of any views that your government might have with respect to meeting the objectives of the resolution," Amano said in an April 7 letter addressed to the foreign ministers of the 151 member states.

On May 5, Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States called for a nuclear-free Middle East. The five nuclear powers, without mentioning Israel, called on all states in the region to sign the NPT.

"We urge those states that are not parties to the treaty to accede as non-nuclear-weapon states and pending accession to the NPT, to adhere to its terms," a statement by the five powers said.

Bolton did not rule out a U.S. campaign against Israel's purported nuclear weapons arsenal. He said the next few months could see an increase in U.S. and other international pressure on the Jewish state.

"The only unknown answer at this point is exactly how much pressure he [Obama] would exert on Israel to do just that," Bolton said. "Part of that pressure is being exerted right now by even considering the possibility of a conference on a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East."

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May 7, 2010 [GET REAL](#)

Report: China, Iran, North Korea have formed strategic alliance

TEL AVIV — [China](#)

, Iran and North Korea have established a strategic alliance that focuses on missile and nuclear development, according to a new report.

The report said that Beijing, Pyongyang and Teheran were helping each other in missile and nuclear programs. The report, titled "China, Iran and North Korea: A Triangular Strategic Alliance," by Israel's GLORIA Center said China and North Korea were the key suppliers of Scud-based ballistic missiles to Iran's military, the target of Western sanctions.

"This flurry of activities underscored the growing proliferation threats posed by DPRK [North Korea] assistance to Iran's missile capabilities, which has also led to collaboration in the nuclear realm," the report, published in the Middle East Review of International Affairs, said.

The report said North Korea helped develop Iran's Shihab ballistic missiles series. Author Christina Lin said North Korea's Taepo Dong intermediate-range missiles have served as the basis of Iran's program, including the design of a nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile with a range of up to 6,000 kilometers, dubbed Shihab-6.

China has sought to make Iran a key waystation in Beijing's [silk road](#) policy of expanding influence throughout [Asia](#). The report said Beijing, believed to be channeling aid through neighboring North Korea, regarded Iran as an ally to balance the strategic relationship between the United States and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

"Iran may also be a new pearl in China's maritime pearl necklace," the report said. "China is increasing its naval presence in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, with a call in December 2009 by Chinese Rear Adm. Yin Zhou to set up a permanent naval base in the Gulf of Aden."

The report did not discount the prospect that China would establish a permanent naval base in Iran. Ms. Yin, today a researcher with Jane's Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Intelligence Center, said China could be offered a naval base at one of Iran's islands in the Gulf.

"Iran may be inclined to offset U.S. pressure by playing the 'China card' should the United States try to project military power by utilizing some of the UAE's man-made islands," the report said. "Indeed, in November 2009, NATO entered into the advanced stages of negotiating a Status of Forces Agreement with the United Arab Emirates in the face of Iran's nuclear threat."

The report said China was expected to block [United Nations](#) Security Council sanctions against Iran. Ms. Lin compared China's role to that of Russia's alliance with Serbia when it came under attack by a Western-led coalition in 1999.

Regardless of UN sanctions, North Korea would continue to funnel weapons and technology to Iran, the report said. Ms. Lin said Iran has financed North Korean research and development of ballistic missiles and other strategic systems.

"Iran and DPRK have partnered closely on missile [flight](#)-testing, proxy testing of DPRK systems in Iran, and data exchanges," the report said. "Proxy testing in Iran of jointly developed missiles allowed DPRK to avoid sanctions after the September 1999 missile test moratorium while continuing its missile advances."

The report said the Damascus-Pyongyang alliance has spread to Syria and Hizbullah. This has included North Korean construction of an alleged plutonium production plant in Syria as well as constructing tunnels for Hizbullah in southern Lebanon.

"The three top Hizbullah officials who received training in DPRK are Hassan Nasrallah, Hizbullah's secretary general and the head of the Hizbullah military organization; Ibrahim Akil, head of Hizbullah's security and intelligence service; and Mustapha Badreddine, Hizbullah's counter-espionage chief," the report said.

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