

The “Threat” of Iran? Or the Threat of Saying “No” to Washington?

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Much has been spoken among American elite circles and the political classes of the threat of Iran. Almost as if it's become a sort of dogma in Washington, amongst Republicans and moderate-Republicans (often referred to as Democrats) alike, Iran is considered as, “[a state sponsor of terrorism](#),” an, “[an existential threat to the United States as well as Israel](#),” if it possessed a nuclear weapon, and Sen. John McCain reminds us that,

“[We must also remember that the threat posed by the Iranian regime](#) goes far beyond its nuclear program. Iran is the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism and the lifeline of terrorist organizations...”

The “threat” is so awesome and formidable that high level US officials continuously threaten the bombing and amelioration of Iran, not if it attacked anyone, but merely for possessing a nuclear weapon, often times only if they are in the process of manufacturing one. Recently Secretary of State John Kerry [stated](#) that,

“if they [Iran] decided they're going to... start enrichment again... guess what? If they do that, then the military option that is available to the United States is ready and prepared to do what it would have to do.”

Obama reiterated Secretary Kerry's remarks saying that in the event that Iran doesn't halt their nuclear program that, “[all options are on the table](#).”

Now despite the fact that Iran thinks this is a big [joke](#), it seems plausible to ask the obvious question, what exactly is this “threat?” If Iran were to be found merely manufacturing nuclear weapons, would this pose such an ‘existential’ security threat that bombing them would be necessary? Is the threat really so great as to be openly provoking and threatening the country with military action as often and haphazardly as top US officials continue to do? A quick look at the Department of Defense's annual report on the military power of Iran gives us an authoritative answer to this question.

The Department of Defense each year produces an unclassified [report](#) to the Pentagon regarding this question, spending tens of thousands of US tax payer dollars in the process (\$22,000 in 2012), and using this exorbitant amount of resources they have come up with the following conclusions. They admit in the opening words that, “There has been no change to Iran's strategies over the past year,” of which they elaborate,

“Iran’s security strategy remains focused on deterring an attack... Iran’s principles of military strategy remain deterrence, asymmetrical retaliation, and attrition warfare.”

Therefore, the threat of Iran, of which US leaders continue to escalate hostilities against with threats of invasion and sanctions, of which they have proven to have done to others who weren’t a threat, didn’t have nuclear weapons, and of whom they had no reason whatsoever to attack, is simply the “threat” that Iran would have the power to deter a US attack.

“Iran has placed significant emphasis on developing and fielding ballistic missiles to counter perceived threats from Israel and Coalition forces in the Middle East and to project power in the region.”

The DoD concludes that Iran’s doctrine is one based upon diplomacy rather than aggression, something they cannot say about their own (Wolfowitz doctrine/ the doctrine of ‘containment’), and one designed for Iran to defend itself if attacked, but only long enough to negotiate a diplomatic solution,

“Iran’s military doctrine remains to slow an invasion; target its adversaries’ economic, political, and military interests; and force a diplomatic solution to hostilities while avoiding any concession that challenge its core interests... Iran also has threatened to launch missiles against U.S. interests and our allies in the region in response to an attack...”

The “existential threat to the United States,” that Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand was cautioning against, the, “world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism,” who’s, “nuclear ambitions,” Sen. McCain was warning us was, “looming above all of these growing dangers (speaking in regards to sectarian conflict in Iraq, the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria, and extremist terrorism like Al Qaeda),” is exactly the kind of threat that scares US politicians the most: the threat of being able to stop Washington from attacking and destroying their country if the US, in the pursuit of freedom and democracy and human rights, deems it right and just to do so. Iran does not pose any kind of threat to the US despite perhaps having limited power to say no to orders emanating from its policy makers.

This US policy of deterring anyone the right to become sufficiently powerful enough to say ‘no’ goes back to the containment policy of the [Wolfowitz doctrine](#), which states, “

The U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests. In non-defense areas, we must account sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order. We must maintain the mechanism for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.”

It also states that,

“Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the

territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to general global power."

This doctrine is significant given what another influential and leading mind in terms of government and US policy wrote in relation to the threat of the Soviet Union. Samuel P. Huntington, then Professor of the Science of Government at Harvard, explained during the beginning of the Reagan years that,

"you may have to sell [intervention or other military action] in such a way as to create the misimpression that it is the Soviet Union that you are fighting. This is what the United States has been doing ever since the Truman Doctrine."⁽¹⁾

So it is not only that no one should have the means of saying 'no' to us if we want to invade and destroy them, it is also that a perceived outside threat is needed in order to sell military intervention abroad so as to maintain global hegemony and domination of the world's strategic resources. This concept was also well understood and articulated by President Obama advisor/mentor and former National Security Advisor to President Carter when he wrote in 1997 that,

"Never before has a populist democracy attained international supremacy. But the pursuit of power is not a goal that commands popular passion, except in conditions of a sudden threat or challenge to the public's sense of domestic well-being."⁽²⁾

Brzezinski followed up by stating, "Moreover, as America becomes an increasingly multi-cultural society, it may find it more difficult to fashion a consensus on foreign policy issues, except in the circumstance of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat."⁽³⁾ External threats, whether actual or perceived, are needed to "fashion a consensus on foreign policy issues," and to create conditions where democracy is not, "inimical to imperial mobilization,"⁽⁴⁾ and to prevent others from, "dominating a region whose resources would... be sufficient to generating global power." It is in these contexts that we must assess the continued statements of the "Iranian threat."

Furthermore, the intent to paint Iran as some kind of aggressive and belligerently militant nation is simply ridiculous. Not even taking into account the fact that the US and Saudi Arabia are the leading state sponsors of terrorism, that the US is the only power to ever conduct a massive global terrorist campaign in the form of drone warfare, or that the global consensus unanimously [sees the US](#) as the greatest threat to peace in the world time and [time again](#) (with Iran falling so far below and in such small percentages that it's not even worthwhile to point them out), the US faces no existential security threat from Iran. A top US analyst, Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a former national security aide to Sen. John McCain, published a [research paper](#) last year in which he stated that because Israel has been working for years to extend the range of its missiles in preparation for a nuclear Iran, that Israel, and not Iran, faces a direct existential

threat,

“Israel now poses a more serious existential threat to Iran than Iran can pose to Israel in the near term... Israel long ago extended the range of its nuclear-armed land-based missiles, probably now targets Iran with thermonuclear weapons, and is examining option for sea launched cruise missiles.” Yoel Goldman reports from the Times of Israel that, “According to Cordesman, Iran will not have the ability to threaten Israel with a long-range nuclear warhead for several years. Today, the Islamic Republic can attack Israel with small bombs from the sea, or with long-range non-nuclear missiles, he noted. “It seems likely that Israel can already deliver an ‘existential’ nuclear strike on Iran, and will have far more capability to damage Iran than Iran is likely to have against Israel for the next decade,”

To further illustrate how the Iranian “threat” amounts to nothing more than a threat of deterrence to the US, we must also reject the common conception that Iran has been aggressively unwilling to compromise on its nuclear capabilities. Noam Chomsky [writes](#) in a December 2013 article, “In mainstream discourse, it is considered natural that Iran alone should make concessions. After all, the United States is the White Knight, leading the international community in its efforts to contain Iran – which is held to be the gravest threat to world peace – and to compel it to refrain from its aggression, terror and other crimes.

“There is a different perspective, little heard, though it might be worth at least a mention. It begins by rejecting the American assertion that the accord breaks 10 years of unwillingness on Iran’s part to address this alleged nuclear threat.

“Ten years ago Iran offered to resolve its differences with the United States over nuclear programs, along with all other issues. The Bush administration rejected the offer angrily and reprimanded the Swiss diplomat who conveyed it.

“The European Union and Iran then sought an arrangement under which Iran would suspend uranium enrichment while the EU would provide assurances that the U.S. would not attack. As Selig Harrison reported in the Financial Times, “the EU, held back by the U.S. ... refused to discuss security issues,” and the effort died.

“In 2010, Iran accepted a proposal by Turkey and Brazil to ship its enriched uranium to Turkey for storage. In return, the West would provide isotopes for Iran’s medical research reactors. President Obama furiously denounced Brazil and Turkey for breaking ranks, and quickly imposed harsher sanctions. Irritated, Brazil released a letter from Obama in which he had proposed this arrangement, presumably assuming that Iran would reject it. The incident quickly disappeared from view.

“Also in 2010, the NPT members called for an international conference to carry forward a long-standing Arab initiative to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the region, to be held in Helsinki in December 2012. Israel refused to attend. Iran agreed to do so, unconditionally.”

In conclusion, we should look critically at the validity of any media or politicians claims in relation to the existence of an outside threat, we should understand that the US is the world’s largest and quite possible will be the only truly global, hegemonic superpower, and that a superpower of this magnitude, and power systems in general, necessitate a perceived

outside threat as a means of mobilizing popular support for imperialistic military ventures, as well as to justify the containment of other powers, the domination of strategic regions, and the acquisition of resources conducive to global power and influence.

It is in this context, and not within some fantastical and arbitrary protestations of “national security threats,” that we must understand the “threat” of Iran, of Russia, of Assad, of ISIS (now IS), of Al Qaeda, or of any other supposed boogeymen that the neoliberal, capitalist, globalist elites choose to throw at us as a means of scaring us into supporting acts of war that don’t protect us, and that, in the end, only serve the betterment and avarice of the politicians, the corporate elites, the military industrial complex, and the profiteers of imperialism and state terror.

Notes

- 1.) Samuel Huntington, *Vietnam Reappraised*, 6.1 INT’L SECURITY, 14 (Summer 1981).
- 2.) Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Eurasian Chessboard,” *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy And It’s Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York, 1997), pg. 35-36.
- 3.) Ibid., “Conclusion,” pg. 211
- 4.) Ibid., “The Eurasian Chessboard,” pg. 36.

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