

Bush and Cheney: All Dressed up and no Place to Go

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“The leader whose thinking process most resembles [Adolf] Hitler’s is our own president. —Like Hitler, (George W.) Bush’s ideological beliefs have blinded him to reality, and like Hitler, he seems impervious to advice that conflicts with his beliefs.”

Charley Reese

“When the tyrant has disposed of foreign enemies by conquest or treaty, and there is nothing to fear from them, then he is always stirring up some war or other, in order that the people may require a leader. “

Plato, (428/427-348/347 B.C.), ancient Greek philosopher

“If the war is enlarged in the next 20 months to include Iran— if that happens—for the next 20 years the United States is going to be bogged down in a war which spans Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and then you can forget about American global leadership.”

Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter

For many months, the [Bush-Cheney administration](#) and its Neocon allies in [Congress](#) and in the [media](#) have been inching toward a fresh new war against Iran, possibly using nuclear weapons, under the same flimsy pretext that it had used, in 2003, to launch an illegal [war of aggression](#) against Iraq. The military gear had been positioned, with three full armadas in or around the Gulf of Hormuz, and the [propaganda machine](#) was running full time to persuade the American people that a state of perpetual war was in their interests.

But something happened on the road to war. On December 3, Michael McConnell, Director of the [National Intelligence Council](#), dropped a political bomb. His office—in close collaboration with the [Central Intelligence Agency \(CIA\)](#) and the fifteen other U.S. Intelligence agencies, regrouped under the umbrella of the [United States Intelligence Community \(IC\)](#)—issued a [devastating report](#) about the veracity of the claims made for months by the Administration that Iran was actively engaged in developing a nuclear arms program. The [National Intelligence Estimate \(NIE\) report](#) said, “*We judge that in the fall of 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program....We assess with moderate confidence Tehran has not restarted its nuclear weapons program as of mid-2007.*” The Director of the US National Council issued also a most unusual statement, saying that “*the decision to release an unclassified version of the key judgments of this NIE [report] was made when it was determined that*

doing so was in the interest of our nation's security. The Intelligence Community is on the record publicly with numerous statements based on our 2005 assessment on Iran. Since our understanding of Iran's capabilities has changed, we felt it was important to release this information to ensure that an accurate presentation is available." In other words, even if the Intelligence Community felt that the disclosure would undermine a key Bush-Cheney policy, they were ready to go public with the damaging report for the sake of national interest.

The very claim of a nuclear Iran has been used by President George W. Bush to push to the limit, at the United Nations and in Congress, to obtain some cover for a bombing campaign against Iran. In fact, as recently as October 17, the American president had used the apocalyptic term of a possible ["World War III,"](#) even raising the specter of a *nuclear holocaust*, to draw the darkest picture possible if Iran was not prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons, thus ending [Israel's nuclear monopoly](#) in the Middle East. Vice President Dick Cheney has also claimed that Iran had a *"fairly robust new nuclear program,"* and that had to be stopped by all means. Indeed, for months, the person in the Bush administration who most wanted a hot conflict with Iran has been [Vice President Dick Cheney](#).

Well, it turns out that both Bush and Cheney knew, at least since last August, that the Director of National Intelligence had concluded that Iran had abandoned its nuclear arms program as far back as 2003, four years earlier. The report had the effect of pulling the rug out from under any plan for a preemptive attack against Iran that the Bush-Cheney administration intended to implement in the near term. This was good economic news. Immediately, the [price of oil](#) receded from its lofty level around \$100 a barrel, an indication that the market had factored in some probability of supply disruptions early in 2008.

Left naked, Bush is now uttering lies and absurdities. First, there was his claim that he had *"only learned of the new intelligence assessment"* the week before, when it is a fact that the President is briefed every morning by the Director of the United States Intelligence Community (IC). Quickly, National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley and Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, contradicted him. Hadley said that *"Bush was first told in August or September about intelligence indicating Iran had halted its weapons program."* And Senator Rockefeller confirmed that *"the president knew, even as he was saying 'World War III' and all that kind of stuff."* And, second, Bush professed about not being deterred by mere facts: *"The [National Intelligence Estimates that Iran has no nuclear weapons program] doesn't do anything to change my opinion about the danger Iran poses to the world—quite the contrary."* I don't know which of these two statements undermine the most President Bush's credibility, if there is any left.

Where does all this leave the warmongering Neocon crowd? They are scurrying in all directions with op-eds in far right media to discredit the U.S. Intelligence Community, trying to rekindle the flames of war against Iran. This a crowd that revolves around the pro-Israel Lobby in the U.S., led by the [American Israel Public Affairs Committee \(AIPAC\)](#), and by some Washington-based pro-Israel "think-tanks" such as the [American Enterprise Institute \(AEI\)](#). They have been pushing for an illegal attack against Iran, using nuclear arms, for years. They have all the reasons now to be displeased. They have used their enormous influence within the Bush-Cheney administration and within the leadership of both Congressional parties to attack Iran, and all these efforts seem to have been made for nil.

Indeed, the Israel Lobby, led in Congress by [Sen. Joseph Lieberman \(Ind-Conn.\)](#), has been strongly influencing some prominent so-called [Bush Democrats](#) to join in the war frenzy

against Iran. As its point-man in Congress, Senator [Joe Lieberman \(Ind-Conn\)](#) has been calling for the U.S. [bombing of Iran](#) every other week, dutifully doing the round of Sunday morning public affairs TV shows. The Neocons have not been deterred by the fact that bombing another country without provocation is an international crime of high order. According to the [Nuremberg Charter](#), it is even a crime punishable by death.

So far, all U.N. resolutions about sanctions against Iran have been specifically framed under Article 41, which entails “measures *not involving the use of armed force.*” It is most doubtful that China and Russia, two Security Council members, will ever accept a resolution that would impose sanctions against Iran under U.N. Article 42, which allows the use of military force “*to restore international peace and stability,*” now that official American intelligence assessments state that there is no Iran nuclear arms program. The United Nations is not going to serve as cover for military operations against Iran.

And the U.S. Congress, especially the non-neocon Democrats, will be increasingly reluctant to give the Bush-Cheney administration a blank check to launch a war against Iran. Last September, the U.S. Senate came very close to handing the Bush-Cheney administration a blank check for military strikes against Iran, when 75 Senators voted in favor of the so-called [Kyle-Lieberman non-binding resolution](#). Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), along with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), voted in favor of the resolution. This was counteracted last November 1, by [30 U.S. Senators](#), none of them Republican, led by Senator Jim Webb, from Virginia, who sent a letter to President George W. Bush stressing that the Administration did not have the legal authority to attack Iran without congressional approval.

In the past, Senator and presidential candidate [Hillary Rodham Clinton \(D-NY\)](#) has even accused Bush of playing down the threat of a nuclear Iran and has called for swift action at the United Nations to impose sanctions on the Iranian government. Similarly, House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi \(D-CA\) ostensibly capitulated to Bush](#), after having attended AIPAC’s annual meeting, stripping from a war finance bill the provision that would have forced Bush to go to Congress before launching an attack on Iran.

Now, with the NIE report officially out, it will be increasingly difficult for the Democratic leadership in Congress to pussycat with the Bush-Cheney administration regarding any future unprovoked aggression against Iran.

Last February, Admiral William Fallon, the head the Central Command (CENTCOM), expressed [strong opposition](#) to an administration plan to increase the number of carrier strike groups in the Persian Gulf from two to three, and he vowed privately there would be no war against Iran as long as he was chief of CENTCOM. And last June, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei said that an attack on Iran over its refusal to freeze programs that could make nuclear weapons would be “[an Act of Madness.](#)”

For the time being, cooler-headed individuals have prevailed over the ideologues and the warmongers. As a result, the planned [Bush-Cheney-Lieberman war against Iran](#) has been sidetracked. With the subprime financial crisis scheduled to pick up steam in the first half of 2008, it is good news that a fabricated geopolitical crisis has so far been avoided. The main question now is to ask whether Bush and Cheney have the gall to ignore the official intelligence report and invent new lies to justify a war against Iran. Stay tuned for more on this incredible saga.

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