

Iran: The Unthinkable War

Part One: Pretending You Didn't Know

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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“Every nuclear weapon is a portable Auschwitz.”

- Daniel Ellsberg

The Democrats are silent as the Bush regime prepares for war against Iran — silent in the face of a potential nuclear mass murder — even a global war. Silent in the face of an attack that could cause an utter meltdown of the global economy, a 1930s style Depression that would send millions, perhaps billions of people into starvation-level poverty, as the prices of oil and gasoline triple.

The potentials for horror for tens of millions of people in the region are almost unspeakable. Such a war would quickly spread to Iraq — where Halliburton's “Green Zone” in Baghdad would be turned to instant rubble by such missiles as were left for an Iranian counterstrike, giving US soldiers in the Zone their own taste of Lebanon, even as Shia Muslims turn a face of cold steel — or wild, inconsolable grief and rage — toward the death of every US and British soldier, mercenary, spy, journalist, and profiteer in Iraq.

According to *Agency France-Presse*, the head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards said, “The Americans know better than anyone that their troops in the region and in Iraq are vulnerable. I would advise them not to commit such a

strategic error. I would advise them to first get out of their quagmire in Iraq before getting into an even bigger one.”

Iraqi Shi'ite leader Moqtada al Sadr has announced that his Mahdi army would retaliate for a US attack on Iran.

A major defeat in Iraq could lead immediately to a military draft, radicalizing, at last, the anti-war movement in the US.

That war would spread throughout the region is all but certain. Whether it could be contained to the region is entirely uncertain.

Militant forces in next door in Pakistan could rise up, forcing loose that government's shaky hold on power, and putting the capacity for a nuclear counterstrike on US targets directly in the hands of the “terrorists” Washington claims to fear and oppose.

40% of the oil on the world market would dry up overnight as Iran shut down the Straights of Hormuz in retaliation. Were a counterstrike aimed at Saudi and other regional oil fields, a tripling of world oil prices might well seem a modest projection.

Seymour Hersh has noted, “Should war break out in the Middle East again... or should any Arab nation fire missiles against Israel, as the Iraqis did, a nuclear escalation, once unthinkable except as a last resort, would now be a strong probability.” Ariel Sharon put the matter more directly. “Arabs may have the oil, but we have the matches,” he said.

In the West, Daniel Ellsberg has suggested a connection between an attack on Iran and rapid developments toward

martial law in the US. Gerard Baker put it this way in a pro-war *London Times* essay called [“Prepare yourself for the unthinkable: war against Iran may be a necessity.”](#)

[T]he kind of society we live in and cherish in the West, a long way from Tehran or Damascus, will change beyond recognition. We balk now at intrusive government measures to tap our phones... Imagine how much more our freedoms will be curtailed if our governments fear we are just one telephone call or e-mail, one plane journey or truckload away from another Hiroshima.

By “another Hiroshima,” he means a Hiroshima in the West, of course, — that’s what’s “unthinkable” — not the Hiroshimas and mini-Hiroshimas the US, and in all likelihood, Israel, will rain on the people of Iran.

An attack on Iran would be the farthest thing from “clean” or “surgical.” The reality is that it would bring horrible death to tens, even hundreds of thousands of people who live near US targets.

While the official line is to minimize the death dealing potentials of nuclear “bunker busters” or Earth Penetrating Weapons (EPWs) of the kind sure to come into play against Iran’s deeply buried nuclear energy facilities, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), winner of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize, begs to differ.

An [IPPNW study](#) concludes that:

[E]ven a very low-yield nuclear EPW exploded in or near an urban environment... will inevitably disperse radioactive dirt and debris over several square kilometers and could result in fatal doses of radiation to tens of thousands of victims.

These tens of thousands “would die excruciating deaths over several days to a week or more.”

Daniel Ellsberg told a gathering of World Can't Wait activists:

Every nuclear weapon is a portable Auschwitz. The first one that is used may kill only hundreds, depending on where they are used, which would be extremely ominous. People would say, "Ah, they can be used easily." The use of nuclear weapons even in a deserted field against an underground site by this country would bring us into a new era of history — the consequences of which would so dwarf the Holocaust there would be simply no comparison. The nuclear wars in our future — that would be started by an act now being planned by this country — are Hitler-like to the hundredth degree.

Even if the messianic Bush regime gets cold feet — an unlikely proposition — the Jerusalem Post assures us that Israel, with its 200 nuclear weapons, may well "go it alone" against Iran.

In his 1997 book *Open Secrets: Israeli Nuclear and Foreign Policies*, Israel Shahak wrote, "Israel is preparing for a war, nuclear if need be, for the sake of averting domestic change not to its liking, if it occurs in some or any Middle Eastern states.... Israel clearly prepares itself to seek overtly a hegemony over the entire Middle East . . . without hesitating to use for the purpose all means available, including nuclear ones."

They would no doubt have the backing of Ariel Sharon sycophant Hillary Clinton and the House Democrats who all but unanimously voted for a resolution supporting Israel's most recent war crimes in the devastation of Lebanon. Only eight Democrats could be found to oppose it.

With respect to Iran, one House member told Seymour Hersh, "There's no pressure from Congress" to avoid military action. "The only political pressure is from the guys who want to do it." The coming war is an imperative of Empire, not just Republican extremism or the compulsion of Christian fascists courting Armageddon.

In fact, an attack on Iran is straight out of the Democrat's

playbook.

Stephen Zunes, Middle East Editor for [Foreign Policy in Focus](#), remarked on the Democratic Party's 2004 platform:

One possible target for American forces under a Kerry administration is Iran. The platform implies an American right to such military intervention by stating that “a nuclear-armed Iran is an unacceptable risk to us and our allies.” No concern is expressed, however, about the already-existing nuclear arsenals of Iran's neighbor Pakistan or of nearby Israel. Iran has called for a nuclear-free zone in the region, which the Democrats appear to reject, apparently because it would require America's regional allies to get rid of their nuclear arsenals as well. The Democrats, like the Republicans, believe that instead of pushing for multilateral and verifiable arms control treaties, the United States can effectively impose a kind of nuclear apartheid, unilaterally determining which countries can have nuclear weapons and which countries cannot.

Get that: Iran has called for a nuclear free Middle East and the Democrats and Republicans alike have rejected that call.

From Lieberman to Obama to Clinton to Kerry to Harman to Bayh to Dean, the story is the same. [Robert Dreyfuss](#) writes that “just as the Democrats meekly got in line to support the invasion of Iraq, many (perhaps most) elected Democrats are demanding a confrontation with Iran, too. Some, such as Hillary Clinton, are even trying to out-Bush the president in demanding a showdown with Iran.”

The Democrat's position paper on “defense,” [“Real Security: Protecting America and Restoring Our Leadership in the World”](#), says Democrats will “roll back the nuclear threats of Iran and North Korea.” The document, gangster style, literally states that Democrats in power would make “an offer Iran cannot refuse” adding, “Iran should understand the existential threat of military response...”

“*Real Security*” calls for massively beefing up spending both on the military and on so-called “Homeland Security,” while offering an ever-so-slightly altered version of Bush's policy of “staying the course” in the occupation of Iraq.

The Democrats are the furthest thing from a “peace” party.

Even liberal Democrat stalwarts like Barbara Boxer have the mad gleam of war in their eyes. Boxer, faced with a claim by Iran that it has no interest in developing nuclear weapons, recently raged on *The Ed Schultz Show* that Iran *should prove the point by signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*. Iran of course, is a signatory to that treaty, and Boxer's comments were the kind of rabid lie — let's not be polite and call it “misinformation” — that

would have left liberals in a rage if it came from the mouth of a Bush or Cheney.

The Democrats refuse even to set a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq – although a recent poll by Zogby International showed that 72% of *U.S. troops serving in Iraq* believe that the United States should end its occupation of Iraq by the end of this year, and even though 61% of Iraqis support Iraqi resistance attacks on US troops. Oddly, the Christian Science Monitor says that the same percentage — 61% of people in the US — oppose the war in Iraq. 87% of Iraqis want the US out of their country.

A new poll from [Reuters](#) shows that only 9% of people in the US favor air strikes on selected military targets in Iran.

But no one in the Democratic Party cares *what* we say, as long as we don't make real trouble for them — trouble in the streets — any more than they cared about the millions who marched in peaceful demonstrations across the globe in a bid to stop the invasion of Iraq before it started. They voted for it anyway, whatever excuses they offer now.

In a word, a vote for the Democrats is a vote for war — in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon or, now, Iran. It is an endorsement of US war crimes, of the policy of “pre-emptive war.” It is a vote in favor of a nuclear Middle East and of US and Israeli nuclear first strikes.

It's also a matter of *pretending you didn't know*.

The truth is that there is no such thing as the lesser of two evils. There is only capitulation to, cooperation with and endorsement of evil, or resistance to it. A slow poison is no better than a fast one, once you're dead. And the more you swallow, of course, the more you will swallow. Only those who resist merit support.

With respect to war, a vote for the Democrats has one impact only; *it changes nothing at all but the voter — turning her into the moral equivalent of a “Good German,” in her relationship to the oppressed peoples of the Third and Fourth Worlds, even if she means only to oppose the Christian Fascists and Armageddon mongers on the hard Republican Right.*

US strategists are not simple madmen — they are imperialists. There is a method and a strategy to the madness, however insane an attack on Iran might appear, and however immense the potential “blowback” to the Empire.

As [Larry Everest](#) notes, the Bush regime “is not unaware of these various concerns. But its

view is that delay and equivocation will only make matters worse and give openings to the U.S.'s regional and global rivals, and that it could lose the whole game if it doesn't maintain the momentum in the so-called 'war on terror,' and aggressively move forward."

"This spring, UN Ambassador John Bolton declared (in clear reference to military attacks possibly including nuclear weapons), 'The longer we wait to confront the threat Iran poses, the harder and more intractable it will become to solve... We must be prepared to rely on comprehensive solutions and use all the tools at our disposal to stop the threat that the Iranian regime poses.'"

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