

Misleading the World on Iran's "Bomb"

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Global Research, December 23, 2014

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

The negotiations over Iran's supposed nuclear bomb-building abilities seem to be stuck in a rut. Given the detailed undertakings by Iran incorporated in the interim agreement made last year it should have only been a hop, skip and a jump to forge a final agreement.

In reality it hasn't been so easy. Over many years the US with European connivance most - not always - of the time manufactured and manipulated the whole crisis. To overcome the suspicions aroused by that, now past, tactic is not easy. That is not just my opinion after following this subject for 30 years. It is that of the former vice-chair of the US National Intelligence Council, Graham Fuller.

Now a new book, ["Manufactured Crisis"](#) by the astute investigative journalist, Gareth Porter, has taken the lid off the attempt by the US, often in collusion with Israel, to paint Iran into a corner, whilst shunning any effort by Iran to resolve the dispute.

But before we get into that I want to make one point about the Islamic sense of morality. Ayatollahs Khomeini and Khamenei, the successive top clerics and paramount leaders of the country, have made it clear on a number of occasions that for their country to build a nuclear bomb would go against Islamic belief and jurisprudence.

I don't find this difficult to believe - during the bitter and savage war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1980 when Iran lost 2 million people Iran refused to deploy chemical weapons even though Iraq did. They too were regarded as un-Islamic. Iran has been consistent in its morality. Iran's religious practice today is about as far away from the Islamic State or Pakistan's Taliban as you can get.

The US has not been consistent in its own Western morality, whether judged by Christian belief or secular values. It provided - as did some European states - sophisticated arms and intelligence to Saddam Hussein's Iraq during its long war with Iran.

This is not to say that in recent years Iran has been straightforward in its nuclear dealings. It hasn't. It has also played a hide and seek game with the US, the EU, Russia and the supervisory nuclear authority, the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency. In its nuclear research it has not taken the straight road to a peaceful use of nuclear energy. It has on certain key points built in a possible dual use of its nuclear infrastructure.

It has done enough of this to allow the US, the EU, the IAEA and Israel to milk this ambiguity for all its worth. They have tried to convince the world that Iran has no compunction about building a bomb and time was its main constraint.

Never has it been admitted that Iran has been playing chess in a desperate attempt to

compel the West to lift the sanctions that were imposed way back in Jimmy Carter's presidency at the time of the hostage crisis, when US diplomats were detained. Studied ambiguity over its nuclear program is the only lever Iran has had to persuade the West to lift sanctions.

Indeed, it is that that has brought the US and EU to the negotiating table. Enriching uranium has been nothing more than an Iranian tactic to get the sanctions removed and to checkmate President George W. Bush's plans for regime change.

In his book Porter makes his own devastating points:

- In 2004 Bush explicitly refused to countenance an agreement between Iran and the UK, Germany and France that would have committed Iran to a minimal nuclear program that would not have constituted a threat of proliferation.
- There was a systemic failure in CIA intelligence that parallels the misleading intelligence that Iraq had nuclear weapons – that let Bush get away with his decision to go to war with Iraq. He ignored the findings of his own National Intelligence Estimate in 2007 which concluded Iran had stopped its nuclear weapons research in 2003.
- The well-quoted dossier of “intelligence” that was publicized by the IAEA in 2009, which “proved” that Iran was engaged in secret nuclear weapons work, was made up mainly of information supplied by Israel.
- It was President Bill Clinton who aligned US policy towards Iran with Israel's. Yet Israel's top intelligence officials did not share the public alarm mouthed by Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Benjamin Netanyahu who used any argument they could lay their hands on to denigrate Iran.
- It was Bush who injected poison into the relationship with his goal of “regime change”. That is why he opposed the European-negotiated compromise.

Now, under President Barack Obama, the US is gradually building a relationship of trust with Iranian leaders. But it needs to bend towards the Iranian position somewhat more if it is to convince them that US policy has truly changed.

Only then will a final agreement be made and the fear of an Iranian nuclear bomb be laid to rest.

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