

# US-Israel War on Iran : The Myth of Limited Warfare

By [Prof. James Petras](#)

Global Research, April 05, 2012

5 April 2012

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

## Introduction

The mounting threat of a US-Israeli military attack against Iran is based on several factors including: (1) the recent military history of both countries in the region, (2) public pronouncements by US and Israeli political leaders, (3) recent and on-going attacks on Lebanon and Syria, prominent allies of Iran, (4) armed attacks and assassinations of Iranian scientists and security officials by proxy and/or terrorist groups under US or Mossad control, (5) the failure of economic sanctions and diplomatic coercion, (6) escalating hysteria and extreme demands for Iran to end legal, civilian use-related uranium enrichment, (7) provocative military 'exercises' on Iran's borders and war games designed for intimidation and a dress rehearsal for a preemptive attack, (8) powerful pro-war pressure groups in both Washington and Tel Aviv including the major Israeli political parties and the powerful AIPAC in the US, (9) and lastly the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act (Obama's Orwellian Emergency Decree, March 16, 2012).

The US propaganda war operates along two tracks: (1) the dominant message emphasizes the proximity of war and the willingness of the US to use force and violence. This message is directed at Iran and coincides with Israeli announcements of war preparations. (2) The second track targets the 'liberal public' with a handful of marginal 'knowledgeable academics' (or State Department progressives) playing down the war threat and arguing that reasonable policy makers in Tel Aviv and Washington are aware that Iran does not possess nuclear weapons or any capacity to produce them now or in the near future. The purpose of this liberal backpedaling is to confuse and undermine the majority public opinion, which is clearly opposed to more war preparations, and to derail the burgeoning anti-war movement.

Needless to say the pronouncements of the 'rational' warmongers use a 'double discourse' based on the facile dismissal of all the historical and empirical evidence to the contrary. When the US and Israel talk of war, prepare for war and engage in pre-war provocations - they intend to go to war - just as they did against Iraq in 2003. Under present international political and military conditions an attack on Iran, initially by Israel with US support, is extremely likely, even as world economic conditions should dictate otherwise and even as the negative strategic consequences will most likely reverberate throughout the world for decades to come.

## US and Israeli Military Calculations on Iran's Capability

American and Israeli strategic policy makers do not agree on the consequences of Iran's retaliation against an attack. For their part, the Israeli leaders minimize Iran's military capacity to attack and damage the Jewish state, which is their only consideration. They

count on their distance, their anti-missile shield and protection from US air and naval forces in the Gulf to cover their sneak attack. On the other hand, US military strategists know the Iranians are capable of inflicting substantial casualties on US warships, which would have to attack Iranian coastal installations in order to support or protect the Israelis.

Israel intelligence is best known for its capacity to organize the assassination of individuals around the world: Mossad has organized successful overseas terrorists acts against Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese leaders. On the other hand Israeli intelligence has a very poor track record with regard to its estimates of major military and political undertakings. They seriously underestimated the popular support, military strength and organizational capacity of Hezbollah during the 2006 war in Lebanon . Likewise, Israel intelligence misunderstood the strength and capacity of the Egyptian popular democratic movement as it rose up and overthrew Tel Aviv's strategic regional ally, the Mubarak dictatorship. While Israeli leaders 'feign paranoia' - tossing clichés about 'existential threats'- they are blinded by their narcissistic arrogance and racism, repeatedly underestimating the technical expertise and political sophistication of their Arab and regional Islamic foes. This is undoubtedly true in their facile dismissal of Iran 's capacity to retaliate against a planned Israeli air assault.

The US government has now overtly committed itself to supporting an Israeli assault on Iran when it is launched. More specifically, Washington claims it will come to Israel 's defense 'unconditionally' if it is "attacked". How can Israel avoid being 'attacked' when its planes are raining bombs and missiles on Iranian installations, military defenses and support systems, not to mention Iranian cities, ports and strategic infrastructure? Moreover, given the Pentagon's collaboration and coordinated intelligence systems with the Israel Defense Forces, its role in identifying targets, routes and incoming missiles, as well as integrated weapons and ordinance supply chains will be critical to an IDF attack. There is no way that the US can dissociate itself from the Jewish State's war on Iran , once the attack has begun.

### **The Myths of 'Limited War': Geography**

Washington and Tel Aviv claim and appear to believe that their planned assault on Iran will be a "limited war", targeting limited objectives and lasting a few days or weeks - with no serious consequences.

We are told Israel 's brilliant generals have identified all the critical nuclear research facilities, which their surgical air strikes will eliminate without horrific collateral damage to the surrounding population. Once the alleged 'nuclear weapons' program is destroyed, all Israelis can resume their lives in full security knowing that another 'existential' threat has been eliminated. The Israeli notion of a war, limited in 'time and space', is absurd and dangerous - and underlines the arrogance, stupidity and racism of its authors.

To approach Iran 's nuclear facilities Israeli and US forces will confront well-equipped and defended bases, missile installations, maritime defenses and large-scale fortifications directed by the Revolutionary Guards and the Iranian Armed Forces. Moreover, the defense systems protecting the nuclear facilities are linked by civilian highways, airfields, ports, and backed by a dual purpose (civilian-military) infrastructure, which includes oil refineries and a huge network of administrative offices. To 'knock out' the alleged nuclear sites will require expanding the geographic scope of the war. The scientific-technological capacity of the Iranian civilian nuclear program involves a wide swath of its research facilities, including

universities, laboratories, manufacturing sites, and design centers. To destroy Iran 's civilian nuclear program would require Israel (and thus the US ) to attack much more than research facilities or laboratories hidden under a remote mountain. It would require multiple, widespread assaults on targets throughout the country, in other words, a generalized war.

Iran 's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has stated that Iran will retaliate with a war of equivalence. Iran will match the breadth and scope of any attack with a corresponding counter-attack: 'We will attack them at the same level as they attack us'. That means Iran will not confine its retaliation to merely trying to shoot down US and Israeli bombers in its airspace or launch missiles at offshore US warships in its waters but will take the war to equivalent targets in Israel and in US-occupied countries in and around the Gulf. Israel 's 'limited war' will become a generalized war extending throughout the Middle East and beyond.

Israel 's current delusional fetish about its elaborate missile defense system will be exposed as hundreds of high-powered missiles are launched from Teheran, Southern Lebanon and just beyond the Golan Heights .

### **The Myth of Limited War: Time Frame**

Israeli military experts confidently expect to polish off their Iranian targets in a few days - some might think a mere weekend - and perhaps without the loss of even a single pilot. They expect the Jewish state will celebrate its brilliant victory in the streets of Tel Aviv and Washington. They are deluded by their own sense of superiority. Iran did not fight a brutal, decade-long war against the US-supplied Iraqi invaders and its western/Israeli military advisers, to just turn over and passively submit to a limited number of air and missile attacks by Israel . Iran is a young, educated mobilized society, which can draw on millions of reservists from across the political, ethnic, gender, religious spectrum, galvanized in support of their nation under attack. In a war to defend the homeland all internal differences disappear to confront the unprovoked Israeli-US attack threatening their entire civilization - its 5000-year culture and traditions, as well as its modern scientific advances and institutions. The first wave of US-Israeli attacks will lead to ferocious retaliation, which will not be confined to the original areas of conflict, nor will any such act of Israeli aggression end when and if Iran 's nuclear research facilities are destroyed and some of its scientists, technicians and skilled workers are killed. The war will continue in time and extend geographically.

### **Multiple Points of Conflict**

Just as any US-Israeli attack on Iran will involve multiple targets, the Iranian military will also have a plethora of easily accessible strategic targets. Though it is difficult to predict exactly where and how Iran will retaliate, one thing is clear: The initial US-Israeli strike will not go unanswered.

Given Israeli-US supremacy in long and medium range sea and air power, Iran will probably rely on short-range objectives. These would include the highly valued US military facilities and supply routes in adjoining terrain (Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan) and Israeli targets with missiles launched from Southern Lebanon and possibly Syria. If a few Iranian long-range missiles escape the Jewish State's much vaunted 'anti-missile dome', Israeli population centers may pay a heavy price for their leaders' recklessness and arrogance.

The Iranian counter-strike will lead to an escalation by US-Israeli forces, extending and deepening their air and sea war to the entire Iranian national security system - military bases, ports, communication systems, command posts and government administrative centers - many in densely populated cities. Iran will counter by launching its greatest strategic asset: a coordinated ground attack involving the Revolutionary Guards together with their allies among the Iraqi Shia troops, against US forces in Iraq . It will coordinate attacks against US facilities in Afghanistan and Pakistan with the growing nationalist-Islamic armed resistance.

The initial conflict, centered on so-called military objectives (scientific research facilities), will spread rapidly to economic targets, or what US and Israeli military strategists refer to as “dual civilian-military” targets. This would include oil fields, highways, factories, communications networks, television stations, water treatment facilities, reservoirs, power stations and administrative offices, such as the Defense Ministry and headquarters of the Republican Guard. Iran, faced with imminent destruction of its entire economy and infrastructure (which occurred in neighboring Iraq with the unprovoked US invasion of 2003), would retaliate by blocking the Straits of Hormuz and sending short range missiles in the direction of the principle oil fields and refineries of the Gulf States including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, a mere 10 minute distance, crippling the flow of oil to Europe, Asia and the United States and plunging the world economy into deep depression.

It should not be forgotten that the Iranians are probably more aware than anyone in the region of the total devastation suffered by Iraqis after the US invasion, which plunged that nation into total chaos and devastated its advanced infrastructure and civilian administrative apparatus, not to mention the systematic obliteration of its highly educated scientific and technical elite. The waves of Mossad-sponsored assassinations of Iranian scientists, academics and engineers are just a foretaste of what the Israelis have in mind for Iran 's outstanding scientists, intellectuals and highly skilled technical workers. Iranians should have no illusions about the Americans and Israelis who seek to thrust Iran into the brutal dark ages of Afghanistan and Iraq . They will have no more role in a devastated Iran than their counterparts had in post-Saddam Iraq .

According to US General Mathis, who commands all US forces in the Middle East, Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia, ‘an Israeli first strike would be likely to have dire consequences across the region and for the United States there’ (NY Times, 3/19/12). General Mathis “dire cost” estimate only takes account of the US military losses, likely several hundred sailors on warships within missile distance of Iranian gunners.

However the most delusional and self-serving assessment of the outcome and consequences of an Israeli air attack on Iran, emanates from top Israeli leaders, academics and intelligence experts, who claim superior intelligence, superior defenses and supreme (if also racist) insight into the ‘Iranian mind’. Typical is Israeli Defense Minister Barak who boasts that any Iranian retaliation will at worst inflict minimal casualties on the Israeli population.

The ‘Judeo-centric’ view of re-ordering the balance of power in the region, which is prevalent in leading Israeli war circles, overlooks the likelihood that war will not be decided by Israeli air strikes and anti-missile defenses. Iran 's missiles cannot be easily contained, especially if they arrive several hundred a minute from three directions, Iran , Lebanon , Syria and possibly from Iranian submarines. Secondly, the collapse of its oil imports will devastate Israel 's highly energy dependent economy. Thirdly, Israel 's principle allies, especially the

US and the EU, will be severely strained as they are dragged into Israel 's war and find themselves defending the straits of Hormuz, their army garrisons in Iraq and Afghanistan , and their oil fields and military bases in the Gulf. Such a conflict could ignite the Shia majorities in Bahrain and in the strategic oil-rich provinces of Saudi Arabia . The generalized war will have a devastating effect on the price of oil and the world economy. It will provoke the fury of consumers and workers rage everywhere as factories close and powerful shocks throughout the fragile financial system result in a world depression.

Israel 's pathological 'superiority complex' results in its racist leaders consistently overestimating their own intellectual, technical and military capabilities, while underestimating the knowledge, capacity and courage of their regional, Islamic (in this case Iranian) adversaries. They ignore Iran 's proven capacity to sustain a prolonged, complex multi-front defensive war and to recover from an initial assault and develop appropriate modern weaponry to inflict severe damage on its attackers. And Iran will have the unconditional and active support of the world's Muslim population, and perhaps the diplomatic backing of Russia and China , who will obviously view an attack on Iran as another dress rehearsal to contain their growing power.

## **Conclusion**

War, especially an Israeli-US war against Iran is indissolubly linked to the asymmetrical US-Israeli relationship, which sidelines and censors any critical US military and political analysis. Because Israel's Zionist power configuration in the US can now harness US military power in support of Israel's drive for regional dominance, Israeli leaders and most of their military feel free to engage in the most outrageous military and destructive adventures, knowing full well that in the first and last instance they can rely on the US to support them with American blood and treasure. But after all of this grotesque servitude to a racist ,isolated country, who will rescue the United States ? Who will prevent the sinking of its ships in the Gulf and the death and maiming of hundreds of its sailors and thousands of its soldiers? And where will the Israelis and US Zionists be when Iraq is overrun by elite Iranian troops and their Iraqi Shia allies and a generalized uprising occurs in Afghanistan ?

The self-centered Israeli policy-makers overlook the likely collapse of the world oil supply as a result of their planned war against Iran . Do their Zionist agents in the US realize that as a result of dragging the US into Israel 's war, that the Iranian nation will be forced to set the Persian Gulf oilfields ablaze?

How cheap has it become to 'buy a war' in the US ? For a mere few million dollars in campaign contributions to corrupt politicians, and through the deliberate penetration of Israel-First agents, academics and politicians into the war-making machinery of the US government, and through the moral cowardice and self-censorship of leading critics, writers and journalists who refuse to name Israel and its agents as the key decision makers in our country's Mid East policy, we head directly toward a war far beyond any regional military conflagration and toward the collapse of the world economy and the brutal impoverishment of hundreds of millions of people North and South, East and West.

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [Prof. James Petras](#), Global Research, 2012

---

## [Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

## [Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Prof. James Petras](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)