

Negotiation, Not Confrontation

No to War and “Saber Rattling” Against Iran

Throughout 2007 the Bush Regime has escalated its criticisms of the Iranian government and threatened to act militarily against that nation, with some even suggesting that nuclear weapons be used. Regrettably, all too many Senators and Representatives want to leave “all options on the table.”

US military action against Iran would only replicate many times over the disastrous results of such action in Iraq and Afghanistan:

- A “preventive war” against Iran would violate international law. (“Preventive war” is the legal term for a war launched without provocation and which is therefore illegal under international law. “Preemptive war” is one where the other country’s armies are poised to attack and said potential attack is preempted. Although not illegal, that clearly is not the case in this situation.)
- There would be significant civilian casualties
- The U.S. would be further discredited and isolated worldwide.
- U.S. intervention would unify Iranians behind the government and set back reform efforts.
- Iran may very well retaliate by attacking U.S. forces in Iraq and possibly elsewhere in the region, including possibly blocking the Straits of Hormuz and preventing the export of oil. Even a “limited” strike runs the risk of creating a cycle of response and counter-response.

Similar to the run-up to the invasion and occupation of Iraq, “intelligence is being fixed around the policy” and dissent is increasingly marginalized. Dubious at best are the U.S. claims that Iran is aiding al-Qaeda in Iraq, resulting in deaths of U.S. personnel. There is no proof of links between al-Qaeda and the Iranian government, just as there was no proof of links between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. The 2007 National Intelligence Estimate did not view Iran “a major driver of violence” in Iraq; General Peter Pace said there was no evidence that Iran was arming Iraqi militias. Yet Vice President Cheney and others continue to repeat these charges, while the national media fails to question them.

The U.S. also accuses Iran of seeking to develop weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. Iran is indeed building a full uranium enrichment cycle, which it claims is for nuclear power only. Iran has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNPT). The Iranian government does not seem irrevocably determined to develop such weapons. Despite having been found to have violated certain reporting requirements of the NNPT, Iran continues to adhere to the NNPT. **The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has found Iran to be in compliance with the treaty and its Safeguards Agreement. Negotiations for granting increased IAEA access to inspect Iran’s nuclear facilities have shown some degree of success.**

Current U.S. policies may well push the Iranian regime to want nuclear weapons, for the following reasons:

- The Bush Administration is proposing massive arms sales to Arab states and Israel for the avowed purpose of containing and intimidating Iran.

- “Regime change” in Iran is official, overt US policy. A special department within the Pentagon is developing scenarios for “regime change.” Congress has allocated \$75 million to “promote democracy” in Iran. The U.S., along with the British, overthrew the democratically elected government of Mossadeq in 1953. Iranians remember and strongly oppose that episode of “regime change” and are opposed to any renewed attempts.
- The Bush Administration has negotiated, however fitfully, with North Korea, which has nuclear weapons, but it invaded and eliminated Saddam Hussein’s regime, which had no weapons of mass destruction. The US has invaded and is currently occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, which have major borders with Iran. It has put the largest assembly of naval vessels since World War II in the Persian Gulf for the ostensible purpose of conducting training exercises.

The Iranian government is open to much legitimate criticism for its domestic policies, its threats against Israel and its denial of the Holocaust. But U.S. threats of unilateral military action will only strengthen the most objectionable elements of the regime.

Brooklyn For Peace supports:

1. Unconditional US negotiations with Iran about all outstanding bilateral issues. The Iranian offer in 2003 for global negotiations on all outstanding issues was rejected by a United States flush from its seeming success in Iraq and Afghanistan.
2. A nuclear-free Middle East
3. Adherence to the NNPT by all countries. Iran should adhere to all provisions of the NNPT and its inspection requirements. The U.S. should not expand its nuclear arsenal and should not provide nuclear materials to countries (including Israel and India) which have not signed the treaty. There must be one nuclear standard for all nations.
4. Congressional legislation blocking funding for an attack on Iran and prohibiting the President from acting militarily without consulting congress.

Brooklyn For Peace opposes:

1. All threats of military action against Iran and the insistence that all options, including nuclear weapons, are on the table.
2. Unilateral economic sanctions and pressure for divestment from any businesses having any involvement with Iran. Sanctions and divestment applied only by the US and a “coalition of the willing” are unlikely to make the Iranian government more pliable. The crippling sanctions against the Saddam Hussein regime not only killed hundreds of thousands needlessly, but also increased the worst tendencies of that regime.
3. All calls for “regime change,” which should come only from within Iran, on terms decided by Iranians.
4. All increases in weapons to any forces and groups in the region by the U.S., Iran, or any other country.