



## Washington Must Strike Iran, Not Bargain With It

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Iran is buying time until it has a nuclear break-out capability. A nuclear Iran will bring about nuclear proliferation, threaten energy prices, pose a threat to regional and global security, and further undermine America's international position. The US must act militarily to stop Iran and restore its credibility in the eyes of its skeptical Middle Eastern allies.

The Iranians have once again been successful in pushing the West into prolonged negotiations over their nuclear program. They have done so almost for two decades, and in the meantime have expanded their uranium enrichment program, worked on weaponization, and built long-range missiles. This indicates without a doubt that they are after a nuclear bomb. The belief and hope that Iran has changed is pathetic. It is obviously interested in removing the economic sanctions imposed on it by the international community, but what Iran is really after is not an agreement, as its gullible interlocutors tend to believe, but rather time. Iran needs time, probably months, to present the world with a *fait accompli*: a nuclear break-out capability, i.e. the infrastructure to assemble a nuclear arsenal within weeks.

Unfortunately, much of the world, including the US, is going along with the Iranian procrastination, failing to realize that Iran is a strategic problem of no comparable regional and global significance. No other issue in the Middle East or elsewhere around the globe can have as negative an impact on world affairs: nuclear proliferation, the prices of a strategic commodity like oil, international terrorism, and the global stature of the US.

## **Regional Nuclear Proliferation**

Allowing Iran to go nuclear or acquire break-out capability will bring about nuclear proliferation at least in the immediate region. States such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey are unlikely to stay behind, which will bring about a nuclear multi-polar Middle East – a strategic nightmare in this volatile region. A nuclear Iran is very different from a nuclear North Korea, whose geopolitical environment already includes two nuclear states – China and Russia – to keep it in check. A nuclear Iran will unquestionably bring about the demise of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a stabilizing factor on the international scene.

## **Effects on the Global Oil Economy**

A nuclear Iran will affect the global political energy economy. Iran's location along the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea – the "energy ellipse" where about 75 percent of the oil reserves are situated – gives it a handle on the price of oil, a strategic commodity. The oil-producing states in the region will inevitably have to consider the desires of an intimidating, nuclear Iran. Iraq is already an Iranian satellite, and Azerbaijan and other Central Asian countries may follow suite. A nuclear Iran might also become more aggressive and take over the eastern province of Saudi Arabia that is mostly populated by Shiites and holds most of the Kingdom's oil. While it is true that Iran and other oil-producing states cannot desist from selling oil, Tehran will be able to decide to whom to sell and at what price.

## **Increased Terror and Military Threats**

A nuclear Iran will be emboldened to be more active as a sponsor of international terror. Its terrorist infrastructure is global, with active and dormant cells in Latin American, North America, Europe, Asia, and of course the Middle East. Iranian tentacles have been observed activating terrorist activities all over the world.

An Iran in possession of long-range missiles armed with nuclear bombs could pose a real threat to many countries within a range of over 2,500 kilometers. This radius includes Eastern Europe, the whole Middle East, Central Asia, and the Indian sub-continent. Iran is working assiduously to extend the range of its missiles to hit North America as well. Hoping for deterrence to be fully effective in the Iranian case is an irresponsible response.

## **Undermining America's International Standing**

Finally, Iran is the supreme test of American credibility in world affairs. After saying so many times that a nuclear Iran is unacceptable, allowing the radical regime of the mullahs to acquire a nuclear bomb or develop a nuclear break-out capability will be a devastating blow to American prestige. Today the US is probably at its lowest ebb in the region. Friends and foes alike are bewildered by the policies of the Obama administration, seeing an extremely weak president who seems to be clueless about Middle East international politics. The American willingness to allow Iran enrichment capabilities and readiness to strike a bargain with Tehran is mind-boggling in this part of the world.

## **The Need for a Military Strike**

At this stage, after several years of confused and misguided American behavior, the only thing that can salvage US influence in the region is an American military strike on Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Without exception, Middle Eastern leaders have a power politics prism to international affairs, and have little patience towards the liberal-inspired speeches of President Obama, who has become a laughingstock among Middle Easterners. Therefore, the only thing that can win their respect is a muscular response on Washington's part. This is what America's allies in the region need and want. They understand, much better than Washington, the current regional realities and dangers of a nuclear Iran.

A military strike is also needed to prevent a nuclear Iran from destabilizing international order. If Washington wants to prevent nuclear proliferation, preserve stability in the energy sector, minimize the risks of international terror, and reduce the nuclear threat from a fanatic regime, it must live up to its obligations as a superpower and the leader of the free world. Going along with the delaying tactics of Iran is dangerous and irresponsible.

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