

## Moves toward War with Iran: In the Event of War ... Part 4

By William R. Polk

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*Editor: This the fourth in a series: [Part 1](#). [Part 2](#). [Part 3](#).*

In previous articles I have set out why I think an America attack on Iran is likely, how such an attack would be carried out and what would happen as a result. Here I will discuss how it could be avoided while preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons.

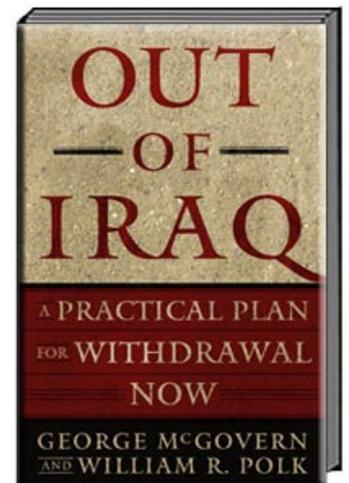
Whether in diplomacy or in business, it is always useful to find out what the other side wants and what it fears. I think the Iranian government's hopes and fears come down to three things. The first is for Iran to have access to the top order of technology. That is symbolized and partly contained in nuclear science. True, Iran has a large reserve of oil, so it is not just a nuclear source of energy that it seeks; rather, it is the boost to its skills that involvement in the whole range of nuclear industry and knowledge would give it.

Second, Iran seeks parity with the major powers. Not just this regime, but every Iranian regime including that of America's friend and ally, the Shah, has been driven by nationalism. It is impossible overemphasize the pride of Iranians in their culture and history. They are determined that Iran not to be a "third world" country.

Third, the Iranian regime seeks protection against threat of invasion by the United States and/or Israel. It was shortly after Iran came out in support of America in Afghanistan that a steady drumbeat of threats to "regime change" it were taken up by the Bush administration. Having been characterized by President Bush as one of the "Axis of Evil," it sees that one of the other two, Iraq, has been invaded and its government overthrown while North Korea, a truly rogue state, acquired immunity from military attack by acquiring nuclear weapons. Iran's leaders read that experience to mean that it should acquire weapons too. Since the period in which a state is trying to arm itself but has not yet done so is highly dangerous, it has sensibly denied a weapons program. Russia, China, Israel, India and Pakistan all did precisely the same. But I feel certain that Iran is hurrying to acquire them. Any other policy would be foolish.

So what to do about it?

Western governments generally proclaim that there are only two choices: either allow Iran to "join the nuclear club" or forcibly disarm it. If these really are the only choices, I think that, however unwillingly,



the European states and even the American public will support the Bush administration in its planned attack. The further spread of nuclear weapons, particularly to another fundamentalist state and particularly one charged with supporting terrorism, is simply too frightening. However, as I shall point out, there is a third option. Let me put it in context of an overall policy.

My considered opinion is that the way to diminish the threat Iran is said to pose to our society and way of life is precisely the opposite of what we are now doing, threatening and building up the means to attack Iran. Instead, first, we should renounce the doctrine of preëemptive strike that is embedded in the U.S. National Security Policy. I quote, “when deterrence fails or efforts short of military action do not forestall gathering threats, the United States will employ military power...In all case, we will seek to seize the initiative and dictate the tempo, timing and direction of military operations...These include preventive actions.” Such a policy is bound to force the Iranian regime to hide what it is doing and to do what it can, as quickly as it can, to acquire the bomb.

Second, we should stop what we are doing to attempt to subvert the Iranian regime. Allegedly, and believed by the Iranian government, we have put agents into the country to attempt to foment rebellion and are now circling it with awesome military forces in an attempt to intimidate its government. It can either acquiesce or resist. As far as we now know, it has chosen to resist. So the policy is self-defeating.

Third, we need to engage in sensible dialog with the Iranian government so that what I believe to be true can be verified. By isolating it, we only encourage the Iranian hardliners and delay any prospects for liberalization.

Fourth, and this is the essence of a move toward regional peace, we should urgently, intelligently and energetically push for a truly different Middle Eastern political and strategic order. This order has two components: the most dramatic and urgent is to work toward regional nuclear disarmament. Europe and America have much experience in this field and were making substantial progress until a decade ago. We need to go back and start again. That is in everyone’s interest: nuclear weapons anywhere are a danger to people everywhere. In its own interest, Israel should agree; so should America; and so, in the context of a move toward peace, should Iran. But again, what Israel, Europe and America are doing is precisely opposed to their interests. England, France and America – in violation of the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty – are increasing and upgrading their arsenals while Israel’s huge arsenal will provoke other Middle Eastern states, as it already has provoked Iran, to acquire them too. Probably sooner rather than later Saudi Arabia and Egypt will move to acquire them. Thus, instead of being a source of security, Israel’s policy on nuclear weapons will severely undermine Israeli security.

Fifth, related to the conflict between Iran and America is the policy of Israel toward the Palestinian problem. Unless or until the Palestinians are at least allowed to form a state, there is no hope for overall security in the area. The fear and hatred that radiate from the Palestine problem poisons all moves toward peace.

Instead of dealing forthrightly with these five issues, reliance on threat and force can only result in protracted warfare and the further spread of terrorism throughout the world. Resolving them is our best means to move toward the peace and security we all want and need.

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