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**THE IRAN  
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PRELUDE TO U.S.  
AND/OR ISRAELI  
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ColdType

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# THE IRAN 'CRISIS' AS A PRELUDE TO U.S. AND/OR ISRAELI AGGRESSION

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**I**t is a bit frightening to see how, even in the midst of the catastrophic aggression and occupation of Iraq, the United States, having engaged once again in the “supreme crime,” is still able to mobilize the UN and its NATO allies to focus on, browbeat, and threaten Iran to abandon its nuclear activities or face some kind of retaliation. This collaboration occurs despite the fact that the case the United States once made about the Iraqi government’s “weapons of mass destruction” threat is at this point perhaps the single most discredited series of official lies in U.S. history, and while the United States is still killing Iraqis, having destroyed the sizable city of Fallujah, and now giving the Fallujah-treatment to a succession of cities that it deems insurgent-friendly, recently Tal Afar, with no end in sight.

True, the UN and NATO allies did give retrospective sanction to the aggression-occupation and have given it substantive support – UN Security Council Resolution 1546 of June, 2004, amounted to a complete reversal of their earlier refusal to sanction the invasion-occupation. But by analogy, if Germany and Italy had been sufficiently powerful, the League of Nations might have belatedly approved the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia and Poland, or Mussolini’s invasion-pacification of Abyssinia, in the pre-World War II era. This is a form of Kafkaesque progress – toward recognition of the rights of those with the biggest teeth and sharpest claws to rule the jungle, sanctioned by the “international community” (i.e., the governments, international institutions, and some NGOs, often far removed from the people who they purportedly represent).

The United States claims that Iran’s moves toward nuclear power would be “incredibly destabilizing” (Bush) and threaten “international peace” as well as stability, whereas presumably the United States really knows all about peace and

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stability, which it has so successfully brought to Iraq and which it and its number one client have brought to Palestine. “Stability” in this Kafkaesque world means an arrangement approved by the Godfather, so that any real world instability is merely transitional, although it may last a long time and involve mass killing and vast destruction.

Another remarkable feature of the new “crisis” is that Iran is successfully portrayed as a villain and threat based on a distant prospect of its acquiring nuclear weapons, even as the United States and its local client Israel brandish those weapons and threaten Iran with attack. If Iran did acquire nuclear weapons it could never use them against Israel or the United States without committing national suicide, whereas the United States has used them in the past and could do so now without threat of nuclear retaliation. However, if Iran built a small stock of such weapons it could pose a low probability threat of a nuclear response to a direct attack. So Iran’s real “threat” is the threat of being able to defend itself. (See Edward Herman, *Iran’s Dire Threat (It might be able to defend itself)*, Z Magazine, October, 2004). But in the present political environment, despite its recent setbacks, the United States can still get the “international community” to go along with its pretense that Iran poses some kind of genuine threat and to cooperate with it in containing that mythical threat – whereas in reality the international community is helping the United States and Israel contain Iran’s “threat” to acquire an improved capacity for self-defense, and helping set the stage for another invasion-occupation.

The United States gets away with this despite the fact that it is unique in having used nuclear weapons – and against civilian populations – continues to improve them and, more recently, has tried to make them smaller and more “practical,” and openly threatens to use them once again. It has abandoned the commitment it made in signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1970 that it would not use them against non-nuclear powers. It has also egregiously failed to implement the promise in that treaty to strive to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether. (In 1996, the International Court of Justice ruled unanimously that “There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control” – see *On the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, pars. 98-103.) The United States has also coop-

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erated with its client Israel in allowing and positively supporting Israel's long-standing nuclear weapons program that has made it the only nuclear power in the Middle East. Thus, by cooperating with the United States in its Iran-containment and prelude-to-aggression program, the international community accepts the blatant double standard: that only the United States and its allies and clients have a right to acquire nuclear weapons, and only their targets are properly subject to international law and must be held to promises made in international agreements.

Of course, the argument is made or implied that the United States and Israel are good, need these weapons for legitimate defense, and are not likely to use them irresponsibly, whereas Iran is not good, supports terrorists, and doesn't need these weapons for legitimate defense. This is pure ideology and utter nonsense, confuted by even a cursory glance at reality (for a fuller picture, William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*; Blum, *Rogue State*; and Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival*). As noted, the good United States is the only country to have used nuclear weapons, and it did so against civilian targets; and in the great tradition in which the incumbent U.S. president operates, President Truman made the lying statement that the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were launched at military targets. On irresponsibility, the United States has violated the UN Charter prohibition of cross-border armed attack, carrying out the "supreme crime" that the UN was designed to prevent no less than three times in the past seven years, and it and its Israeli client have systematically violated the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners and behavior in occupied territories, while Israel has ignored dozens of UN Security Council rulings, with U.S. support.

As regards the support of terrorism, Iran is not in the same league as the United States and Israel, both of which have often directly engaged in terrorism – i.e., wholesale terrorism – as well as sponsoring and supporting retail terrorists. The U.S. nuclear club and threat is itself a form of terrorism, and the United States has repeatedly threatened nuclear bombing, as well as standing alone in having used such horrible weapons, and against Japanese civilians, in two of the great terrorist acts in human history. Its "shock and awe" strategies are openly designed to terrorize, and in Iraq as well as Vietnam (etc.) it pacifies by the use of massive fire power that terrifies as well as kills. The United States eventually turned to

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civilian targets in Serbia in 1999 with the open objective of forcing a quicker target surrender via terror attacks on civilians. Israel has also done the same, its pacification process during its long occupation and “redeeming the land” on the West Bank involving the steady and brutal use of force and terror. Years ago Abba Eban admitted that civilians in Lebanon had been bombed because “there was a rational prospect, ultimately fulfilled, that afflicted populations would exert pressure for the cessation of hostilities.” That is, Israel had followed a policy of terrorism, on Benjamin Netanyahu’s own definition of the word: “the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends.”

This wholesale terrorism, directly employed, is supplemented by the sponsorship and support of local terrorists and terrorist armies. The Israelis sponsored a proxy army in Lebanon for years, just as the United States supported the Nicaraguan contras, the Mujahadeen and Taliban in Afghanistan (in the 1980s), and Savimbi’s UNITA in Angola (among other terrorist forces – see further William Blum’s *Killing Hope*). This is just scratching the surface of wholesale and sponsored terrorisms that Iran can never match. It is one of the great accomplishments of the Western propaganda system that these real and massive terrorisms are normalized, cannot be referred to by an invidious word like terrorism, the perpetrators allowed to be only “retaliating” and engaging in “counter-terrorism.” (See Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, *Who Terrorizes Whom?* ZNet, October 18, 2001.) And with straight faces U.S. officials can get away with talking about bad Iran posing the danger of supporting terrorism!

### **THE PARALLELS BETWEEN THE IRAQ AND IRAN RUN-UPS TO COMMITTING THE SUPREME CRIME**

One similarity between the Iraq and Iran run-ups to military attack is threat inflation and a steady focus on the alleged threat. Even if Iran had a nuclear weapon or even a dozen nuclear weapons, would that threaten world peace and produce instability or would it merely lessen the threat to Iran itself by the power that proclaims a right to preventive warfare and its Israeli client? The mainstream media absolutely refuse to discuss this substantive issue, merely taking it for granted that Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons would be very bad, and as good propaganda agents focusing only on daily claims of the threat and Iran’s

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alleged illicit and menacing moves toward acquiring such weapons. If their government says Iran's actions pose a dire threat, that is enough for the media. The media were badly burned in the Iraq run-up, and a few of them belatedly expressed regret at their gullibility, the New York Times most famously, but it took them no time at all to move into the same gullibility and propaganda role as regards the terrible Iran threat.

Does the United States have clean hands in dealing with this issue? That is, has it abided by its NPT obligation to not threaten or use nuclear weapons against countries agreeing to forego nuclear weapons, and also to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on complete and general disarmament under strict and effective international control" (Article VI)? The answer is no on both counts: it has now openly threatened to use such weapons against any target, and it has not only refused to work toward the elimination of nuclear weapons, it has made them explicitly a part of its fighting arsenal and is spending large sums to make them more practicable. The media never discuss this issue, which would make the U.S. stance on Iran's nuclear weapons policies seem less credible.

These U.S. failures also suggest that a reasonable case could be made for U.S. "non-compliance" with the NPT, and that a "timeline" of its non-compliance might be constructed that would be far richer and vastly more relevant to global security than that fixed in regard to Iran's conduct. After all, Iran doesn't have a single nuclear weapon, and has a right under the NPT to develop a nuclear capability for peaceful purposes (Article IV); the United States has thousands of such weapons and poses a real threat to use them, and is in blatant violation of its agreement to work toward the reduction in existing stocks of weapons. (According to the estimate of the National Resources Defense Council, the United States possessed 10,600 nuclear warheads as of 2002 – slightly more than one-half the world's total.) Yet the country without one such weapon is under siege for NPT violations while the one in open violation of its NPT obligation to work toward nuclear disarmament leads the siege, with the cooperation of the UN and international community.

Do the United States and Israel pose a military threat to Iran, possibly greater than the threat Iran poses to those countries? Does Iran have a right to defend

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itself against such threats? These matters are off the agenda for the propaganda system, but implicitly Iran has no such right. This double standard is clearly something that would be awkward to discuss openly.

Israel has developed and produced nuclear weapons and threatened to use them and to attack Iran if it shows signs of working toward the development of such weapons. Is it reasonable that Israel should be free to do this and create and maintain a huge imbalance of power in the Middle East, and refuse to sign the NPT, whereas Iran, which signed the treaty and allows frequent and intrusive inspections, should be the focus of attention and be deemed villainous for any inspection problems? Again, this is not discussible because it reflects a huge bias and double standard better kept implicit.

As in the Iraq case, the UN and NATO allies have again chosen to accommodate the Godfather, so that instead of rejecting the crude double standard being imposed by a government with notoriously unclean hands they have been struggling to push Iran to agree to forego nuclear independence altogether, even for work on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy that the United States itself had encouraged for Iran when its dictatorial client the Shah was in power. This caveat-in has helped make Iran appear the villain posing a serious threat, and as with the cave-in on Iraq it is setting the moral stage for U.S. and Israeli aggression. “[T]hough I am accused of something,” Kafka’s Joseph K. reminds an Inspector in *The Trial*, “I cannot recall the slightest offense that might be charged against me. But that even is of minor importance. The real question is, Who accuses me? What authority is conducting these proceedings? Are you officers of the law?”

The mechanism of the Iran pre-attack process is in many ways similar to that employed in the run-up to the Iraq invasion: Throughout roughly the same period that the United States has occupied Iraq, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been pressuring Iran to live up to “safeguards” as well as sign onto the Additional Protocol of the NPT (which it did in 2003). The focus is on what the IAEA inspections regime regards as the “remaining outstanding issues,” as the IAEA Director General expressed the matter in his September 24 news conference. The result has been a never-ending series of IAEA assessments of Iran’s “compliance” with its NPT obligations, combined with a relentless re-definition of the “outstanding issues” before the IAEA. This process works through an institutional machinery which, once activated, as in the case of Iraq, makes it impos-



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sible for the accused state to satisfy the suspicions raised about its weapons program. Crucially, this institutional machinery only gets activated to focus on a target of the Godfather's choice, and never the Godfather or his Israeli client – though the Godfather is in open violation of the NPT, and its client refuses to make itself subject to that agreement.

The major “outstanding issue” before the IAEA at present, and the one that both Washington and the E.U.-3 (Britain, France and Germany) managed to make the *bête noire* of the special IAEA resolution of September 24 – the first resolution to date to raise the possibility that the Iranian nuclear program could fall “within the competence of the Security Council, as the organ bearing the main responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” (Par. 2) – turns on Iran's unwillingness to surrender its right under the NPT to engage in the nuclear-fuel cycle. In the November, 2004 Paris Agreement with the E.U.-3, Iran had agreed to “extend its suspension to include all enrichment related and reprocessing activities,” while gaining the E.U.-3's recognition that “this suspension is a voluntary confidence building measure and not a legal obligation” (INF-CIRC/637). At the start of August of this year, Iran notified the IAEA that it was restarting its Uranium Conversion Facility at Isfahan, thereby ending its voluntary suspension of this facility's uranium-enrichment activities. So the “international community” is upset with Iran because Iran is no longer voluntarily declining to engage in the nuclear-fuel cycle, having chosen instead to remove the IAEA's seals on its centrifuges and start running them again. To be perfectly clear about this: No one at the IAEA has found Iran to be in violation of its NPT obligations. Rather, Iran stands accused of having failed to surrender its right to engage in activities in which Iran has every right to engage under the NPT itself. The appearance of a “crisis” has been fabricated out of nothing more than this.

The Resolution adopted by the IAEA's Board of Governors on September 24 by a vote of 22 to 1 (with 12 abstentions) makes no claims about Iranian violations of any obligations whatsoever. Instead it is simply purported anger at Iran's unwillingness to maintain the voluntary suspension of its Uranium Conversion Facility at Isfahan; that is, Iran's decision to do what it has every right to do under the NPT. This Resolution even uses the phrase “resulting absence of confidence that Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively for peace purposes...” (Par. 2) – an unmistakable echo of the U.S. Secretary of Defense's assertion with respect to

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alleged Iraqi weapons capabilities that the “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” (Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Board of Governors, IAEA, September 24, 2005.) With the Godfather threatening renewed aggression, and the UN and international community once again leaning over very far backwards to appease it, as in the Iraq case, it will be hard for Iran to reestablish “confidence” in its objectives and to prevent a new round of supreme criminality.

As in the Iraq case, it is very rare for the mainstream media to suggest any U.S. motives beyond those proclaimed by the Bush administration itself – concern over violations of the NPT, Iran’s deceptive actions, and possible instability and nuclear support of terrorists. Could the U.S. focus be based on worry over a still-independent oil power in the Middle East that has even proposed organizing an alternative oil contracting market with business done in Euros? (See Ryan McGreal, *Iran in the Crosshairs*, Raise The Hammer, August 22, 2005). Could it be a simple continuation of that projection of power by an openly aggressive imperialist state that is out of control and threatening perpetual war and perpetual aggression? Could it be service to the Israeli state, which would like to see the last remaining local rival power crushed? Again, these possibilities are off the mainstream agenda, which remains in servitude to state policy.

### **CONCLUDING NOTE**

The U.S. nuclear stockpile contains roughly one-out-of-every-two warheads of the global stock, and the United States possesses by far the most sophisticated and diversified systems for delivering its weapons to any place, at any time. Even granting the current regime’s pledge to reduce the U.S. nuclear stockpile to 6000 warheads by 2012 (and we are not sanguine about the actual prospects), in sheer operational terms, the United States is the world’s nuclear-weapon power without peer. (*Nuclear Insecurity: A Critique of the Bush Administration’s Nuclear Weapons Policies*, Robert S. Norris et al., Natural Resources Defense Council, September, 2004.) For its part, Israel is believed to possess on the order of 200 nuclear warheads (though estimates vary), having completed its first operational nuke as early as 1967 (if not earlier). But, crucially, although the only nuclear-weapon power in the greater Middle East, Israel also is the only state in the region

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never to have acceded to the NPT or any of the multiple “safeguard”-type agreements in which Iran has been ensnared. It has never submitted to so much as a single weapons inspection. And hiding behind Washington’s skirt, it has never been made a target, much less a recurring one, of the international community’s non-proliferation concerns, with the attendant media focus, threat-inflation, and political demonization that invariably accompanies it. Clearly, U.S. and Israeli policy with regard to nuclear weapons, these states’ obsession with maintaining their military superiority by further armament and aggressive warfare and diplomacy, their policies of power-projection and “redemption of the land,” are themselves hugely destabilizing and distorting factors within the Middle East, and promise steady violent conflict in the years ahead.


The U.S. exploitation and abuse of Iran’s signatory status with the NPT, and therefore NPT-related “safeguards” and the IAEA’s inspections process, to harass Iran over its nuclear program these past three years, and the ongoing U.S., Israeli, and other cross-border threats directed against Iran, are all clearly part of this broader power-projection effort. Given these realities, it is ludicrous to depict Iran’s nuclear-related policies as threats to “international peace and security,” as the U.S. and the E.U.-axis of Britain, France, and Germany have done. Iran is the prospective next victim, and it is being threatened only in part to prevent it from taking steps that would enhance its power to defend itself. Under the NPT, Iran cannot legally develop nuclear weapons for this purpose, and any small number that it might somehow acquire would threaten nobody over the next decade and beyond. However, Iran is another center of power in the Middle East, as was Iraq, and allowing it to grow and prosper outside of U.S.-Israeli control is contrary to power-projection plans. Its nuclear-weapons threat is the parallel of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction threat – a cover and rationale for aggression and conquest.

If the UN and the international community were ruled by a sense of justice rather than power, and capable of adopting measures to defend against all threats to peace and security, they would not be threatening Iran with referral to the Security Council over a nuclear program that is neither illegal nor demonstrably serving any other than a peaceful purpose. Instead, they would be assailing the United States and Israel and pressing them to abandon their threatening posture

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toward Iran, and to begin to live up to the letter and spirit of the Non-Proliferation Treaty – the U.S. by working toward nuclear disarmament, and the Israelis by acceding to the NPT while doing likewise. Whether we are talking about pre-invasion Iraq or Iran today, the priorities of the UN and the international community are not only badly misdirected – they are fundamentally at odds with the cause of peace and security. What is more, they have reached this dangerous stage for one reason above all: The hijacking of the decisive multilateral institutions by Great Powers committed to exploiting them for aggressive ends.

Where nuclear weapons are concerned, the only safe and sane goal over the long term is their elimination, and each state's surrender of that part of its sovereignty that covers nuclear energy to the administration of a genuine international agency capable of ensuring that nuclear energy contributes to "peace, health and prosperity throughout the world," and is "not used in such a way as to further any military purpose" (here quoting the IAEA's founding statute, drafted in 1956 – the "atoms for peace" idea). Within any reasonable hierarchy of concerns, the risk of the development of nuclear weapons by the Have-Not states is at most a second-order issue; rather, it is the possession of nuclear weapons by the Haves that remains an overriding issue of the gravest order. For the IAEA or any other multilateral organization to conduct its affairs according to a different hierarchy shows how misguided and politicized it is. But there is no good reason to expect the Have-Nots not to pursue nuclear weapons, given an international context within which the Haves at one and the same time threaten them while adamantly refusing to disarm. It is the conduct of the nuclear-weapon Haves that destabilizes and threatens international peace and security, and even survival. From the standpoint of a more peaceful world, liberated from the rule of violence, it is above all the nuclear-weapon Haves that need to be deterred and contained.



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