

The US and Iran: a Peaceful Way Forward

BY BEHROOZ GHAMARI-TABRIZI

No one can say with confidence what the Iranian leaders have in mind. Do they have ambitions to enrich weapons grade uranium or are they simply looking for a long-term plan for their energy needs? No one should or could accept the Iranian leaders' assertions that they have no intention of developing a nuclear arsenal.

No one should or could believe the Bush administration's promises that it will pursue a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the current crisis, much of which is manufactured by the neo-conservative war machine.

When President Bush calls the idea of using bunker-buster tactical nuclear weapons "wild speculations", no body should believe him or any other White House denials that it is in the midst of activating its contingency war plans on Iran.

War is not inevitable, no matter how hard the both sides try to make it so. The following six-point proposal is based on an assumption that the most significant element compelling the Islamic Republic to contemplate militarizing their nuclear technology is their threat assessment.

Those in the Bush administration who believe that they could bomb Iran into submission, or deter their resolve to advance a nuclear technology, are simply racing away from a negotiated settlement of the current conflict.

Once compared to all other coercive and military measures, the six-point plan to resolve the crisis offers concrete benefits for both sides. The major costs of this solution (comparing to the possible hundreds of thousands of deaths, immense destruction of Iranian cities, and colossal economic price for both sides) are symbolic, for the most part, and require prevailing over issues of pride and prejudice.

1. Iran has an inalienable right to peaceful nuclear technology. This right comes with the responsibilities and obligations to the international community as stated in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Should Iran decide to expand and sustain a nuclear technology which

includes full cycle enrichment program, the Islamic Republic must comply with the IAEA's terms of inspection and regulation. Iran should guarantee the complete transparency of its program.

2. The United States should sign a non-aggression pact with Iran that recognizes the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic and pledges non-interference in Iranian domestic affairs. The United States must categorically reject any project of regime change in Iran.

If the Bush administration is committed to the cause of democracy and human rights, it must recognize that its efforts to "buy" or "install" democracy in Iran, or any other country in the world, have the contrary effect of strengthening undemocratic forces. American threats justify the suppression of civil liberties at home and abroad.

The United States and its European allies must recognize that even the most intrusive inspection regime cannot stop Iran from contemplating the militarization of its nuclear technology. The peril of such a development cannot be contained or eliminated by threats of war. Rather, these threats provide stronger and more justifiable reasons for speeding up the militarization of peaceful nuclear technology.

3. The Iranian government should accept and guarantee a policy of non-interference in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As the former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami has acknowledged, Iranian policy must be based on the recognition of the Palestinian peoples' right of self-determination. The Islamic Republic must guarantee that it will respect any agreement between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority.

4. Iran should formally acknowledge that the seizure of the American Embassy in Iran was a violation of international laws protecting diplomatic missions. It should recognize that by seizing the embassy they violated the sovereignty of the United States.

Prior American involvement in Iran, especially the US role in installing and supporting the regime of Mohammad

Reza Shah, could not and should not justify the act of holding American diplomats hostage. Iran should restore the embassy to its original condition and maintain the grounds for its future transfer to its American owners, or pay damages to the American government.

5. The United States should release all frozen Iranian assets, lift its trade embargo, and halt punitive measures against companies which invest in Iranian industry.

6. Both the US and the Islamic Republic should begin negotiations preliminary to re-establishing full diplomatic relations. This could be part of a joint US-Iranian effort to stabilize Afghanistan and Iraq.

I urge opinion makers in the US to press the government to turn away from fomenting war. This proposal could be the means to de-escalating the crisis. CP

Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi is a professor of history at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana.

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times.

Back in 2001, riding high as an FBI undercover informant, Khan, equipped with a secret recorder, made friends with the Hayats and did what such FBI provocateurs always do: sought to push young Hayat into self-incriminating statements and actions while urging the shy young fellow to be a man and do battle for Islam.

Khan's credibility has taken some heavy punishment, but that aside, the government has failed to make an overpowering case, even with the videotaped confessions the defense say were extorted from the befuddled and uncomprehending Hayats. A juror who was excused by the judge because she'd failed to disclose a brief relationship to a sheriff's deputy in 1996 told reporters she was unpersuaded by the government's case.

"Beyond a reasonable doubt – that hasn't been proven, in my opinion," said

Andrea Clabaugh, a 39-year-old Carmichael resident who works as an accounting manager at a structural engineering firm in Sacramento.

"In my notes, I recall writing down something about the agents feeding him names. It didn't seem like Hamid actually volunteered anything. During those interrogations, it looked like he was being badgered. It felt to me that in some respects he was giving them information because they didn't believe him when he said he didn't know anything. He had to tell them something."

For Muslims in America it's a fraught case. Aside from the prosecution of the Hayats, the government went after two Pakistani imams in Lodi who agreed to be deported on immigration violations after the government tried to link them to extremists. Obviously, if the government had anything on the imams they would have held them and prosecuted. Muslims fear a conviction of the Hayats would unleash further prejudice and harassment.

The star of the courtroom battles so far is Hamid Hayat's lawyer, Wazhma Mojaddidi, an Afghani immigrant and practising Muslim, only three years out of law school. This is her first criminal trial and her first federal challenge, and all agree she has risen brilliantly to the challenge. She's stylish too. "The other day," the *Sacramento Bee* quotes a friend, "she wore amazing iridescent, taupe, pointy snakeskin shoes. She's worn a pink suit, chocolate and turquoise jackets, and a green-striped dress. "I like colorful clothes," Mojaddidi says.

She's married to a Pakistani immigrant, and has the advantage of speaking five languages including Pashto, Urdu, Farsi, English and French.

The case went to the jury April 13.

The case in Lodi is but one of many terror trials, launched by the U.S. Justice in the wake of the 9/11/2001 attacks, which have put the prosecutors and the FBI in an exceptionally poor light. Here in CounterPunch we recently described at some length the farcical imbroglios that followed the Bureau's misidentification

of a fingerprint taken from a bombing scene in Madrid and the efforts to put an innocent Portland lawyer in prison for a lengthy term. Eventually the case was thrown out after the Spanish police managed to make it clear that the print had absolutely to do with any finger on either of Brandon Mayfield's hands. It turned out that the bombers in Madrid had nothing to do with Al Qaeda.

In a Detroit case involving the prosecution and convictions of three Muslims – a supposed terrorist "sleeping cell" — in 2003, the sequel has been the release of the convicted men. A grand jury has now issued an indictment of Richard Convertino, the lead prosecutor from the DoJ, along with Harry Raymond Smith, a security official from the US embassy in Amman. They are charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice by making false statements.

In Florida the widely publicized Sami al-Arian case ended with his acquittal on all the most serious charges. In the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui in Virginia the prosecution were seconds from losing its case amid charges of witness tampering before the demented Frenchman made his bid for glory by alleging his target was the White House and his proclaimed accomplice Richard Reid, the man now serving a life term for boarding a plane with explosive in his shoes. CP

Regarding the Lodi case, this piece has relied on the excellent reports in the San Francisco Chronicle (primarily by Demian Bulwa) and by reporters at the Sacramento Bee.

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