

Last Chance To Avoid Nuclear War?

The **Sunday Telegraph's editorial** today summarises the situation: Iran is in the process of building an arsenal of nuclear weapons. With the assistance of North Korea and Russia, it has just acquired long-range missiles capable of striking Europe (to complement those it already has, which are capable of striking any of its neighbours, and Israel). The Telegraph says that the last chance of avoiding war is for the Security Council to impose 'a more aggressive inspections regime'. But experience with the Security Council before, during and since the liberation of Iraq suggests that it will take no such action. In other words, it will squander the Telegraph's 'last chance' – which, in any case, would be unlikely to work against a totalitarian regime determined, and adept, at concealment.

What sort of war will we get? It is unlikely that the mullahs are planning a first strike, even against Israel (though, since both their ideology and some of their own public statements rationalise and purport to justify a Second Holocaust, it would be criminally irresponsible to discount that possibility). Nor are they likely to be planning any invasions under cover of their nuclear umbrella: all their neighbours are now US allies, and any such invasion would fail humiliatingly. They see these weapons as both a symbol and a deterrent. A symbol of something that isn't true (that their state and its ideology are thriving), and a deterrent against something that could never happen *except* possibly under the provocation of this very policy.

So they are living in cloud-cuckoo land. The war is most likely to come at the moment when reality finally encroaches on this fantasy world. Perhaps when the Iranian people finally rise up to free themselves. At that point, the mullahs and their Revolutionary Guards and all the incumbents of the present evil regime will have nothing left to lose and are likely to try any desperate kill-or-cure gamble. Or rather, what they will see as a gamble: in fact, like the 'gamble' of Argentina's President Galtieri in invading the Falkland Islands, it will certainly fail, and seal their own fate. But Galtieri's fantasy, like the mullahs', blinded him to that inevitability. How much death and destruction will they wreak before that inevitable outcome?

As to war in general there is also positive news. According to [this report](#) the number of armed conflicts in the world has declined by more than 40% since the early 90s.

Henry Sturman

by [Henry Sturman](#) on Tue, 10/18/2005 - 13:33 | [reply](#)

So What Should We Do?

Seems like a tough problem. Should we go after their nukes?
Should we (secretly) ask Israel to do it?

(I'm serious about the question. Your premises seem reasonable, but when reality encroaches on fantasy, as it invariably will, perhaps a second holocaust is possible. I have not heard any good answers to the Iranian problem)

by a reader on Wed, 10/19/2005 - 21:31 | [reply](#)

The Problem

Nuclear capability across a number of countries appears inevitable. I would think its more a question of a race of democratic principles and cultural/political evolution versus fundamentalism/fanaticism. Countries which have evolved citizen participation and a broad base of rights and education would appear less likely to engage in nuclear brinkmanship and foolishness. The history of technology has shown that technology is neutral and sooner or later available to all. The primary alternative to foolishness and fanatical despotism is reason, so is it a race to reason?

by a reader on Thu, 10/20/2005 - 15:05 | [reply](#)

Preemptive Strike

Does anyone have a reasonable theory for or against attempting to bomb nuclear weapon sites in Iran?

by a reader on Thu, 10/20/2005 - 15:22 | [reply](#)

Re: So What Should We Do?

If Iran doesn't back down it seems quite likely [Israel will bomb](#) their nuclear facilities. I don't think Israel is likely to fall for the argument given [here](#) that Iran is already a democracy and that their having nuclear bombs is justified as a defense against Israel and other countries. And as after the 1981 Osirak strike, it will probably take an ungrateful Europe at least 10 years to thank Israel for taking away the threat.

Henry Sturman

by [Henry Sturman](#) on Fri, 10/21/2005 - 00:10 | [reply](#)

MAD

MAD (mutually assured destruction) has so far rendered nuclear weapons entirely unuseable whenever both conflicting parties were nuclear capable.

Suicidal religious extremism trumps the MAD deterrent though, that's the scary thing about countries like Iran having nukes. Strike them first, ask questions later, I say.

by Bob W on Sat, 10/22/2005 - 06:56 | [reply](#)

Don't make more ladens

Striking will only encourage more youngsters to become Ladens.

by a reader on Sun, 10/23/2005 - 21:10 | [reply](#)