
New Look at Iran's Policies

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"We don't need a nuclear bomb.

We don't need that.

In political relations right now, the nuclear bomb is of no use"

M. Ahmadinejad

There was a pause in the process of escalating tensions over Iran but it is over now. By October of 2008 it has become clear that Iran may not receive the status of observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and thus may not be able to use the so-called "nuclear umbrella" of the SCO leaders, Russia and China, and India and Pakistan, which are about to join this influential organization by the end of the year.

This fall the international community proved to have almost forgotten the conclusions made by the leading US experts¹ concerning the fact that Tehran halted its nuclear arms effort in 2003. Due to Iran's nuclear program experts are again talking about the so-called "red line" Tehran may overcome soon.

Citing the Israeli sources, they name the year 2010 as the time Iran will be able to produce a nuclear bomb.²

The US, where both the Democrats and the Republicans approve a military operation if Iran succeeds in its nuclear works, will have to engage in a war.

However, the beginning of the invasion will be postponed until the "obvious evidence" appear and at least one round of talks is held in case Barack Obama wins the November presidential election in US. Obama announced that if elected president "he would engage in aggressive personal diplomacy" with Iran, the country he sees as "a threat to all of us". It probably does not suit the team of the lame duck Republican candidate John McCain, and if he is defeated, the Republicans may try to make a final shot and launch a military campaign against Tehran ahead of Obama's inauguration.

The information on the US plans to resume direct diplomatic ties with Iran in November has leaked.³ The reason is quite clear: lacking areas of support inside Iran, only the US embassy in Tehran could have become a center of coordination during the planned war. And this really will be full-scale military operation aimed at seizing control over Iranian key cities and facilities as targeted bombing rarely give the necessary results. Iranians learned the international and Iraq's experience while constructing strategic objects (the destruction of an atomic center in Iraq in 1981) and provided the proper anti-air defense.

Having toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein under the pretext of combating Iraq's mythical nuclear program, the US is now preparing the same scenario for Iran.

What the US army should expect in Iran? What kind of victory Washington may be waiting for?

Both Iran and Iraq are Oriental states but there is a difference the US generals would better keep in mind. Firstly, the population and religious unanimity of Iran. There are more than 72 million people in Iran, 90% of them are Shia Muslims. Secondly, geographical aspect. Iran resembles Afghanistan, where the US and its allies, (the Soviet Union and England before them) were stuck in. Finally, the Iranian leaders remember the year 1979, when the Shah's regime was toppled despite the presence of US institutions there. Today Iran relies on its patriotic army, inspired by the culture of Ashura.

A present-day European citizen will hardly grasp the meaning of the 1914 protest campaigns in Iran, where people celebrated the beginning of a war and longed for the blood of their enemies. In the meanwhile, it is 30 years already since Iranians have been demonstrating their readiness to die in the name of their faith. Shia men and women take part in the Ashura holiday to commemorate the supreme sacrifice rendered by Imam Hussein (killed in 680) and uphold the principles of justice and truth against the force of tyranny. People from all layers of society, including the army and the navy, take part in the ceremonies beating their chests and self-flagellating. For more than 1000 years the Ashura tradition inspires Shia Muslims to the fight against violence. The new generations of Iranians, like the heroes of the national epos, demonstrate their willingness to follow in Hussein's footsteps and die for Iran's independence.

During a closed dinner with the Democrats in the Senate, the incumbent US Secretary of Defence, the former CIA chief and an expert in Russia and USSR, Robert Gates, commented on the possible consequences of a US attack on Iran. By the way, under his supervision the Pentagon launched the work on the text of an ultimatum Iran is due to receive on the day of invasion.⁴ According to a prominent US journalist Seymour Hersh, Robert Gates warned the senators that military sanctions against Iran would prompt the creation of "a whole generation of jihad's followers our grandsons will have to fight with here, in the United States".⁵

Now that only 2 months are left before the year 2008 ends, we may say that the situation in both Iraq and Afghanistan proves that the US military machine in the Middle East crashed. Iraq is in chaos after being deprived of its economic and industrial potential. No authorities, no public government, just increasing separatism and violence. In Afghanistan (which yet has not lived a day without war since 1979) the Talibs destabilized the traditional society, suggesting a model of "a new Afghan", an orphan brought up in the Pakistani centers for training rebels. These centers focus on radical Islam and hatred to anything "alien" to their culture. The US godfathers were not satisfied with the support the Talibs demonstrated to Al Qaeda, while Afghanistan did not like the idea of "a war against everyone".

There is another very important issue that unfortunately receives little coverage in the media: the destruction of unique cultural monuments of ancient civilizations (national museums, the Buddhas of Bamyan, the ruins of Babylon, etc). UNESCO and some members of the international community expressed their condemnation but their voices were hardly even heard. No one believed that with the toppling of Hussein, those precious items of cultural heritage would be destroyed. Now what will happen with the Iranian treasures? What if fanatics begin to ruin Louvre or the London Museum? Will the EU members be watching this silently? Washington is obliged to give solid guarantees to prevent another humanitarian catastrophe in the region and preserve the cultural heritage in case of the war against Iran. The decision must be approved by the UN.

Those who know something about the Oriental world, must be aware that to seize power there is not enough, it is necessary to keep hold on it. The US officers understand that Washington is capable enough to attack Iran. But they are not quite sure that the Iranian leaders will adequately interpret their actions.

But pragmatism must not give way to the temptation to win. The time has shown that in the East a "spring can be squeezed for quite a long time but one day it straightens". In the 19th century the Englishmen learned this quite well in three wars with Afghanistan, when only a one English officer escaped death as his troops retreated from Kabul to Jelalabad.

Probably, the war will help the US administration topple the "Ayatollah regime", but this is very likely to become a Pyrrhic victory. For Washington it would be better, maintaining its military pressure over Iran, to use the policy of detente, the one so popular during the conformation between the two systems. As Churchill used to say, "however beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results". Under the George W. Bush, instability in Iraq and Afghanistan practically united the Near and the Middle East into one region. Amid chaos in Iraq and weakening countries of the Gulf, of Central Asia and South Caucasus), the developing Iran each year gains more traits of the regional superpower, while its confrontation with the US gives Iran the status of a global player (this fact distorts the real balance of power in the region).

The US hegemony over Eurasian territories seemed to be so real after the approval of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI)⁶. Then the ICI attracted the Arab states of the Gulf, the US military contingents entered Afghanistan and set up its bases in Central Asia, relying on Georgia and NATO's Turkey.

Then there came a blitzkrieg in Iraq, and Iran was next in the list, when luck betrayed Bush. Now each month the US tax payers spend more than 8 billion dollars on the Iraqi campaign. ⁷

The Iranians hope that amid the global financial crisis the US won't dare to launch another military campaign.⁸ However, another scenario is also possible: a new war will help the US nation forget th previous failures, while new military expenses will help it to cope with the crisis (experts say the predicted break in oil deliveries from the Gulf and the Caspian region make it quite real).

In the meanwhile, under the pretext of nuclear non-proliferation, the US is trying to prevent Tehran from boosting its defence industrial sector. Being unable to persuade the UN to impose new sanctions against Iran, the US sanctioned "Rosoboronexport"- the Russian state-owned company responsible for Russia's military an technical cooperation with foreign partners.

Commenting on the issue, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Washington was mistaken to think Russia would accepts the US approaches to the solution of the Iran's nuclear issue. "Our cooperation with Iran in all spheres meets all the norms of international legislation and the export control regime of the Russian Federation", Mr. Lavrov said. ⁹ Military-technical cooperation with the third countries is a common thing for all arms producers, and to impose sanctions on a state supplier means to be preparig for some very serious political steps.

Unlike their US colleagues, experts in Europe are negotiating the idea of "a new start". They admit they made a mistake in 2003, when did not even try to achieve an agreement with Iran, and now are revising the events of the past decade. Now it is a very popular belief that being carried away by the idea to stop Iran's full-fuel-cycle program, the West "lost Iran". But "Iran means too much for Europe to be mentioned only in terms of its atomic program",- says Christoph Bertram from the EU Institute for Security Studies.

He insists the EU should revise its approach to Iranian issue amid the weakening grip of US power and Tehran's milder home and external policies. Of course, Israel's position has much influence there. As an alternative to a

new approach to Iran they offer the policy of detente, which appeared during the Cold War, when the Soviet Union threatened the capitalist West with the world communist revolution and Nikita Khrushchev said the Soviet Union would "bury" the West. So the situation with the "export of Islamic revolution" and anti-Israel rhetoric has very much in common. The West should offer Iran a policy of detente or partnership and warn that any kind of attack on Israel will result in immediate military campaign. The US, the EU and Russia are viewed as Iran's guarantors of security.¹⁰

For Russia the world map without Iran, the last island of stability in Central Eurasia, would be a serious blow. A new geopolitical and humanitarian catastrophe in the region will boost international terrorism and drug business, as well as unresolved inter-ethnic conflicts and religious extremism. It will destroy the process of regional integration and modernization. Russia is ready to back all constructive international initiatives aimed at peaceful settlement of Iran's issue. It is important for Moscow to be ready for anything, no matter how the situation will be developing in future. _____

1 See the report by the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on nuclear weapons, published in December, 2007.

2 Marcin Zaborowski. Bush's legacy and America's next foreign policy. /Institute for Security Studies. EU. Chaillot Paper. â„-111, Paris, September 2008, p.75

3 [Http://iran.ru/rus/news_iran.php](http://iran.ru/rus/news_iran.php)

4 [Http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/02/12/munich](http://lenta.ru/articles/2007/02/12/munich)

5 Seymour M. Hersh. Preparing the Battlefield. The Bush Administration steps up its secret moves against Iran./The New Yorker, July 7,2008.

6 ICI was launched during NATO's 2004 Istanbul summit.

7 Marcin Zaborowski, p.108

8 [Http://iran.ru/rus/news_iran.php](http://iran.ru/rus/news_iran.php)

9 [Http://www.rian.ru/politics/20081024/153783747.html](http://www.rian.ru/politics/20081024/153783747.html)

10 Christoph Bertram. Rethinking Iran: From confrontation to cooperation./Institute for Security Studies. EU. Chaillot Paper. â„-110, Paris, August 2008, p.52
