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# US not going to war with Iran.

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/PanARMENIAN.Net/ This week a report by chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace alerted Congress in the kind of military "shorthand" officers use to say we're in a mess. Strained by Iraq and Afghanistan, the report warned, there is "significant" risk that the U.S. military won't be able to respond to another crisis. This represents a substantive worsening in military preparedness from a year ago, when the risk was assessed as "moderate."

Yet, at the same time, there is speculation -- and yes, evidence -- in Washington these days that the administration and our military leaders are moving ahead toward some kind of strike at Iran -- Gen.

Pace's "other crisis" right on our doorstep!

Ah but, you say, civilian voices from Defense Secretary Bob Gates on down have said we are NOT going to war with Iran. Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who has correctly called virtually every turn from the beginning of the Iraq disaster, commented on CNN about his new piece on Iran in the latest New Yorker magazine.

"The Pentagon is in the midst of intensive plans to bomb Iran," he says. "In fact, some American intelligence forces have been going into Iran for months. They expect an attack this spring. Much of the senior military leadership does not want it."

Then, speaking of the two carrier groups that are now in the Persian Gulf and would have to leave it through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, Hersh adds: "They could have a terrible carrier problem in the strait, where they are very vulnerable to attack. The Iranians have hundreds of PT boats that could become suicide boats."

"My instinct tells me that the president is not going to leave without doing something on Iran."

Of course, everyone agrees -- including, amazingly, the Europeans, Russians and Chinese -- that there is a real danger from Iran and its nuclear program. But the question is how best to deal with the Persian state.

Among our best scholars, the question comes down to whether the United States should develop a strategy to enforce "regime change" or more long-term and lasting "behavior change."

We have a good example in Iraq of exactly how far the administration's foolhardy regime change policy has gotten us -- we may soon face a series of regional wars across the entire Middle East. On the contrary, it has worked when the United States and other countries have pursued in-depth, well-considered policies of behavior change, as they have in the past, even with Iran. (Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states normalized relations with Iran in the 1990s, for instance, in exchange for Iran halting support of radical elements within those states.)

In a brilliantly argued piece in the recent Foreign Affairs, Ray Takeyh, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, argues that it is "time for detente with Iran" in place of the present policy of

non-recognition, military threats and cultural insults.

"Washington must eschew superficially appealing military options, the prospect of conditional talks, and its policy of containing Iran in favor of a new policy of detente," he writes. "In particular, it should offer pragmatists in Tehran a chance to resume diplomatic and economic relations. Thus armed with the prospect of a new relationship with the United States, the pragmatists would be in a position to sideline the radicals in Tehran and try to tip the balance of power in their own favor."

Takeyh's recommendations are actually backed up by real, palpable changes within Iran that make long-range behavior change a possibility. Local votes within Iran have gone strongly against the fanatic Iranian president. Criticism of him has even come from the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iranian scholars just denounced the sinister Holocaust conference held in Tehran last year, saying it merely provided a pretext for warmongers in the region.

Despite the raving threats of the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Takeyh sees him as "not a messianist seeking to usher in a new world order; he is a canny manipulator trying to rouse public indignation in a chaotic neighborhood." And Iran, no longer the messianic Islamic state of the Ayatollah Khomeini in the 1980s, is now a regional power seeking "not assurances against U.S. military strikes but an acknowledgment of its status and influence." Thus, the more we threaten and insult, the more radical and ready to strike out they become.

These are the kinds of rational foreign policy ideas being voiced more and more in America's intellectual establishment -- and they offer the only cause for hope that we have. Yet our military, so brilliant in its training and weaponry, has not seen fit to build these ideas into its policies. They cannot, of course, publicly criticize the president or their civilian leaders. But they are by law supposed to privately give the president their best advice, and there is no evidence that this has occurred over Iran.

There are many ways within the Pentagon that power can be used to form and change policy. But if we attack Iran -- and it looks as though the U.S. would do it, not Israel -- even these small hopes will be sacrificed for years, reports Yahoo News.

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