

## Should We Let Iran Go Nuclear?

By [Joel C. Rosenberg](#)

U.S. and Israeli experts increasingly believe Iran could have its first nuclear weapon by the end of 2009 or early 2010. President Barack Obama has all but ruled out military force to stop Iran, preferring instead to pursue direct negotiations with Tehran.

Last week, however, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, dismissed such talk. “Negotiations with whom?” asked Khomeini. “With an occupying and bullying regime [Israel], who does not believe in any other principle other than force?...Or negotiations with America and Britain who committed the biggest sin in creating and supporting this cancerous tumor [the Jewish State]?”

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also dismissed his American counterpart’s desire for direct talks, saying they could only happen if the U.S. abandons her “satanic, coercive and aggressive ways.”

Yet even as the leaders of Iran talk about annihilating Israel and the U.S., and feverishly try to build, buy or steal nuclear weapons, a growing chorus of “experts” in the U.S. foreign policy community are actually suggesting a nuclear-armed Iran might not be such a terrible thing.

Barry R. Posen of the *MIT Center for International Studies* wrote an op-ed for the *New York Times* on February 27, 2006, entitled, “*We Can Live with a Nuclear Iran.*”

Journalist Paul Starobin, in a column published in *National Journal* on May 19, 2006, argued that “Iran’s acquisition of a bomb would probably improve the chances of the U.S. and Iran renewing a dialogue after all these years” because, as one Mideast analyst told him, “they see acquisition of a nuclear weapon as a precondition of having talks with the U.S.”

Ted Koppel, the former host of ABC’s *Nightline*, suggested in a 2006 op-ed in the *New York Times* that the world should allow Iran to get the Bomb. “Washington should instead bow to the inevitable,” he insisted. “If Iran is bound and determined to have nuclear weapons, let it.”

*CNN* founder Ted Turner went even further. “They [Iran] are a sovereign state—we have 28,000 [nuclear warheads]—why can’t they have 10?” he argued in 2006. “They aren’t usable by any sane person.”

In the fall of 2007, former CENTCOM commander John Abizaid said publicly, “There are ways to live with a nuclear Iran. I believe we have the power to deter Iran if they go nuclear,” just as we deterred the Soviet Union and China. “Iran is not a suicidal nation,” he added. “Nuclear deterrence would work with Iran.”

Throughout the 2008 presidential primaries, deterrence and containment were the themes of the Democratic contenders. Then-Senator Barack Obama dismissed the seriousness of the Iranian threat during his campaign, saying it was nothing compared to the threat the Soviet Union posed during the Cold War.

Former U.N. Then-Senator Hillary Clinton was even more explicit during an interview on ABC's *Good Morning America* on the morning of the Pennsylvania primaries. She threatened to wipe Iran out after an Iranian nuclear attack, hoping that such strong language would deter the Iranian regime from launching such an attack. "You said, 'If Iran were to strike Israel, there would be a massive retaliation,'" noted host Chris Cuomo. "Scary words, Mrs. Clinton. Does 'massive retaliation' mean you go into Iran, you would bomb Iran? Is that what that's supposed to suggest?"

"Well, the question was if Iran were to launch a nuclear attack on Israel, what would our response be?" Clinton replied. "And I want the Iranians to know that if I'm the president, we will attack Iran, and I want them to understand that, because it does mean that they have to look very carefully at their society. Because at whatever stage of development they might be in their nuclear weapons program, in the next ten years, during which they might foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them. That's like a terrible thing to say, but those people who run Iran need to understand that because that perhaps will deter them from doing something that would be reckless, foolish, and tragic."

Clinton is now the Secretary of State, responsible for orchestrating direct negotiations. But there are two serious flaws in Clinton's thinking.

First, by offering a reactive rather than a proactive military strategy vis-à-vis Iran, she is allowing for the possibility of another Holocaust. If Iranian leaders acquire nuclear warheads and can attach them to the high-speed ballistic missiles they already have, Ahmadinejad could kill some six million Jews in about six minutes. What good would it then be to say that the U.S. would obliterate Iran after Ahmadinejad or a successor accomplishes another Holocaust?

Second, Clinton and her like-minded colleagues hope their tough talk will deter Iran's leaders from launching a nuclear attack against Israel. But will it? Consider events through the lens of Shia eschatology, or End Times theology. Ahmadinejad and his colleagues have publicly stated that the end of the world is near and that the return of the Islamic Messiah known as the "Mahdi" or the "Twelfth Imam" is "imminent." To bring about the conditions optimal for the Mahdi's return, Iran's leaders must – according to Shia scholars – create global chaos and carnage.

As I document in my new non-fiction book, [\*Inside the Revolution\*](#), Ahmadinejad believes he has been chosen by Allah to annihilate the U.S. and Israel and export the Islamic Revolution. The only way that is remotely possible, humanly speaking, is for Iran to acquire nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them

against America and Israel. How then could the West successfully deter or contain Iran's messianic, apocalyptic leaders? If they die, these Radicals believe they are going directly to Paradise. What could we possibly offer them as either carrots or sticks that would keep them from what they see as their God-given duty when their failure to obey could be, in their minds, disobedience punishable by an eternity in the fires of hell?

Yet many in Washington do not see the problem. Vice President Joe Biden, for example, said during the campaign, "My concern is not that a nuclear Iran some day would be moved by messianic fervor to use a nuclear weapon as an Armageddon device and commit national suicide in order to hasten the return of the Hidden Imam. My worry is that the fear of a nuclear Iran could spark an arms race in the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and others joining in."

A nuclear arms race is certainly a very real concern. But based on the evidence, why would Biden be so quick to dismiss the messianic fervor of Iran's leadership? Ahmadinejad, after all, is not just another power-hungry dictator in the mold of the Soviet or Chinese leaders of yore. Neither is Khamenei. They are not Communists. They are not atheists. They do not believe that this world is all there is. They are devout Shia Islamic extremists. They believe they are Shia "John the Baptists," forerunners of the soon-coming Islamic messiah. They believe their life mission is to kill millions of Jews and Christians and usher in an Islamic caliphate. If they die, they are convinced they know where they are going. But they do not really believe they are going to die—not at the hand of the infidels, at any rate. They believe instead that they have been chosen for a divine appointment and that nothing can stop them. That is what makes them so dangerous.

Unfortunately, too many Washington politicians—Obama, Clinton, and Biden included—do not yet understand this. To misunderstand the nature and threat of evil is to risk being blindsided by it. To misunderstand the nature and threat of Iran's End Times theology could be the prelude to genocide. Dare we be blindsided?