

Why Iraq and now Iran?

A well-considered article ... print it out for careful reading. (It's long)

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On April 28, IAEA released its report on Iran. IAEA reported that: "the Agency cannot make a judgment about, or reach a conclusion on, future compliance or intentions." The report came as no surprise to those who have been following the ongoing dispute between Iran, United States and the IAEA.

The United States, for quite some time now, has been accusing Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons and Iran has been insisting that its intentions are peaceful and that it is only interested in peaceful use of nuclear energy. Iran, to allay the international community's fear, froze its enrichment program and started a series of negotiations with U.K., Germany, and France. However, without the United States these negotiations were not going to produce any results, since it was only the United States that could address the Iranian's national security concerns. Iranian seeing themselves surrounded by American forces wanted a security guarantee that United States would not invade Iran, something that United States was not prepared to give. So the negotiations with the European three failed and Iran resumed its enrichment program. Iran was threatened with Security Council and even invasion without any effect. Now once again there is talk of Security Council resolution under article 7 and continuous threats of invasion. There have even been talks of tactical nuclear strike on suspected Iranian nuclear facilities.

All these events are reminiscent of the negotiations and threats preceding the invasion of Iraq. The unfolding events are so similar that makes one wonder if the Iraq scenario is not being used as a template for Iran. And with what has come to light since the Iraq invasion, we have to assume that like Iraq, the decision to invade Iran has already been taken, and that the E.U. Three negotiations and IAEA are being used to prepare the public for that event. There are already reports of increased U.S. provocations along Iranian borders such as flying unmanned surveillance flight over Iran, and insertion of commandos into Iran for intelligence gathering and other activities. The talk of invasion is also accompanied with war games. For example on April 14, 'USA Today' reported that "Amid rising tensions between the United States and Iran over the future of Iran's nuclear program, the Pentagon is planning a war game in July so officials can explore options for a crisis involving Iran." [1]

But this war game is not the first of its kind. According to William M. Arkin of the Washington Post, "In early 2003, even as U.S. forces were on the brink of war with Iraq, the Army had already begun conducting an analysis for a full-scale war with Iran. The analysis, called TIRANNT, for "theatre Iran near term," was coupled with a mock scenario for a Marine Corps invasion and a simulation of the Iranian missile force. U.S. and British planners conducted a Caspian Sea war game around the same time. And Bush directed the U.S. Strategic Command to draw up a global strike war plan for an attack against Iranian weapons of mass destruction. All of this will ultimately feed into a new war plan for "major combat operations" against Iran that military sources confirm now exists in draft form." [2]

But why did United States attack Iraq and why is she so keen on attacking Iran now? We now know that from the beginning, this administration was looking for any excuse to invade Iraq. Washington has, over time, given a number of different reasons for invading Iraq: starting with Iraq's developing nuclear weapons, to war on terror, to spreading

democracy in the Middle East. All these reasons have proven to be false. Iraq did not possess any Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD); and did not have any link to Al Qaeda. And instead of democracy, Iraqis have had to endure Abu Gharib, car bombs, shortage of basic services such as electricity, clean water, and health care. None of the ministries are functioning properly and in addition Iraq has to deal with half a million displaced people. There is also talk of partitioning of Iraq [3]. On top of all this, the Iraqis now face a possible bloody civil war.

After spending over \$320 billion on the Iraq war (officially so far) and with no end in sight, why is this administration insisting in starting another catastrophic war in the Middle East?

There have been a number of theories put forward by various groups and individuals.

- Crusade– Some Muslims think that United States has started a crusade against Islam and is determined to vanquish any and all countries that stand in its way.
- Oil Reserves– There are other groups who think that with the oil reserves diminishing fast, United States is trying to corner all the reserves and supplies for itself, thereby ensuring its future dominant economic position in the world.
- China– There are others who think that invasion of Iraq and targeting of Iran is part a geo-political move by United States to block China's emergence as a world power by restricting its access to oil.
- Israel– And finally there are those that argue that United States doing the bidding of Israel and getting rid-of those that may challenge Israel's hegemony in the Middle East in the future.

The answer probably contains some of all of the above.

Crusade Against Islam

Muslims living in Jakarta, Cairo, Karachi, London, or Detroit, every day, hear and see things that seem hostile, if not to them personally, then to other Muslims across the world [4]. They have seen the plight of Palestinians for years without anyone doing anything about it. They are frustrated by the impotence of their leaders in the face of the neo-colonialist encroachment of the west. They hear the West talk about democracy and yet see the West support the very dictators that are oppressing them. They see that when in exceptional cases, like Palestine, where there has been a democratic election, the West has stepped in to dismiss the results as not acceptable. They look at their past colonial masters and fear their return in disguise. They see the wars like Iraq and the war on terror as excuses for new colonial ambition of the West. And above all they feel that their lives and rights, in the eye of the West, are worth less than non-Muslims. They are appalled by extrajudicial killings in Israel, torture of prisoners by Americans, the treatment of the Guantanamo prisoners, and ongoing torture of people at the hands of Western supported dictators as signs that the West in general and America (as the leader) in particular is on a crusade to subjugate them.

Fight for Oil Reserves

The profits of five oil companies combined (American: ExxonMobil, Chevron, and Conoco, British: Shell and British Petroleum) in 2005 was \$111 billion. And these profits are about to go through the roof. The reason? Production cannot keep up with demand,

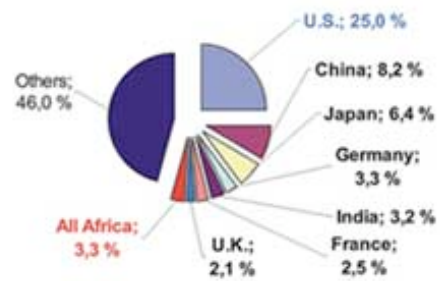
and even if it could, there isn't enough oil to satisfy all, at present prices. Oil companies' valuations are based on those companies' access to oil reserves. Iraq and Iran combined have over 20 percent of the world's total proven oil reserves. Imagine what having access to those reserves will do for the valuation of American oil companies, not to mention their profits.

There is also the matter of consumption. United States consumes fully 25 percent of the world oil supplies. China and India are growing rapidly and their economies consume more and more oil. China currently consumes 8.2 percent of the world's oil production. Soon it will increase to 10 or even 14 percent. Where is that oil going to come from? Is the United States willing to reduce its share for China? It is highly improbable.

World Oil Consumption. Source: British Petroleum (BP), "Statistical Review of World Energy 2005."

Oil Consumption By Country, 2005

Recently, President Bush held a television conference where he assured the public that Americans' dependence on oil soon would be over. He spoke of great new technologies and fuel sources that were just around the corner. What he forgot to mention was that there are 600 million cars in the world today that run on petrol, and it is estimated that if the present trend continues, by 2030, the number of cars in the world will reach 1.2 billion [5].

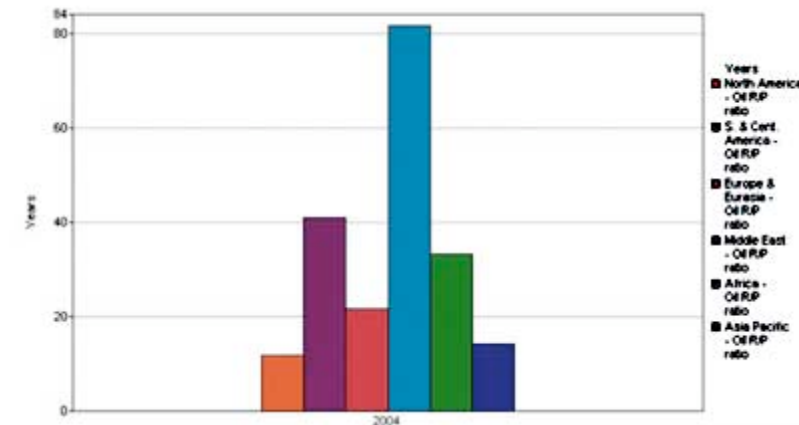


Just to change the engines of the existing 600 million cars will take years, not to mention all the petrol stations and the support facilities that have to be modified for this to work. There is also more in a barrel of oil than petrol for our cars. We need such oil derivatives as jet fuel, Kerosene, lubricants, feedstock, asphalt, etc., for our industries to function.

Currently over 60 percent of the world's oil reserves are in the Middle East. Four countries in the region, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Kuwait, have over half of the world's proven oil reserves.

If we keep the world's oil consumption at its current level then the Middle East can theoretically supply the world with oil, at its current production rate, for another 80 years.

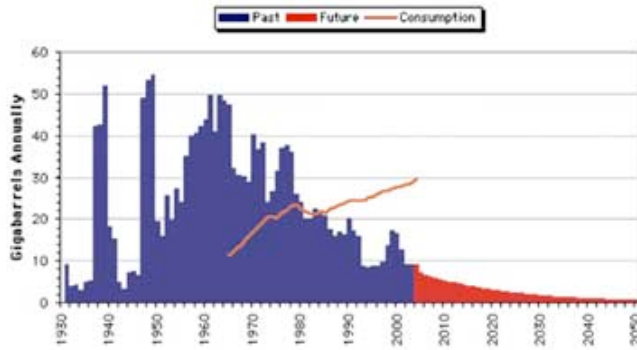
World Oil Source:



Reserves.

"Statistical Review of World Energy 2005," BP.

But the fact is that in 15 years the North American and Asia Pacific oil reserves will be depleted. This will represent a marked reduction in oil supplies worldwide. In other words within 15 years if we do not increase oil production drastically in the Middle East and elsewhere, the world will face tremendous oil shortages. Increasing oil production is not that easy either. Each oil field has an optimum production rate. If one tries to go beyond that rate and tries to sustain a high production rate, one damages the oil field and, thereby, substantially reduces the amount of recoverable oil. This problem is well documented by the oil industry.



Source: Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas (ASPO).

But what about the new oil discoveries? Well there have been very little new discoveries; the future doesn't seem that bright either. According to the Energy Information Administration's (EIA) analysis of the long-term world oil supply, we can expect to discover only 10 percent more oil in the future [6]. Even this 10 percent is disputed. The Association for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas (ASPO), which closely follows the development in the oil industry,

the Foundation of Economic Sustainability (FEASTA), and others see an alarming trend in the future of oil discovery and production.

If one looks at the amount of oil discovered in the years from 1930 to the present, one sees a clear downward trend in new discoveries; this in spite of using more money and better technologies.

In March 2005, HIS energy (an international oil consultancy firm) did a comprehensive analysis of the world oil supply and demand and reached the following conclusion: that even if one includes natural gas production and all other liquid fuels in our total available supplies, there will be a shortage some time around 2011 to 2020 [7].

China

In 1972 Richard Nixon went to China to secure an ally against the Soviet Union and thereby shift the balance of power towards the West. Recently President Bush made a similar trip to India to enlist it as an ally against China. The United States sees China as its main strategic competitor now and in the near future. The United States is concerned with losing its dominant position in East Asia to China. This concern has been voiced by both political and military authorities. In the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review Report, China is identified as a major concern.

"Of the major and emerging powers, China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages, absent U.S. counter strategies. China is an emerging world power." [8]

The report goes on to point out that in United States should take all necessary steps (in case of hostilities) to deny China its strategic and operational objectives.

“The United States will work to ensure that all major and emerging powers are integrated as constructive actors and stakeholders into the international system. It will also seek to ensure that no foreign power can dictate the terms of regional or global security. It will attempt to dissuade any military competitor from developing disruptive or other capabilities that could enable regional hegemony or hostile action against the United States or other friendly countries, and it will seek to deter aggression or coercion. Should deterrence fail, the United States would deny a hostile power its strategic and operational objectives.” [9]

To this end the United States is restructuring and repositioning its bases to be better able to contain China’s growing power. It has also revamped its alliance with Japan and other countries in Southeast Asia. In addition, the United States is transforming Guam into a hub for long-range bombers and is planning to add a sixth aircraft carrier to its pacific group.

All these steps are taken to contain China and limit its ability to move freely in the area. On top of all this, the United States is positioning itself to control China’s access to China. If the United States can control the oil reserves it will be able to determine not only the economic growth of China but also limit its strategic ambitions.

Israel

There is no doubt that Israel has a powerful lobby in the United States. There are currently over 50 Jewish organisations that directly or indirectly lobby for Israel. The Israeli influence is well known, but few are willing to openly talk about it, especially in the United States and Europe. The Israeli dimension is particularly difficult to mention, for if one dares to state the obvious, one is branded as an anti-Semite or a terrorist sympathiser. The Jewish lobby also can make life very unpleasant for those who dare to mention the extent of its influence in U.S. and other countries.

There are still a few brave souls such as John Mearsheimer (Professor of Political Science and the co-director of the Program on International Security Policy at the University of Chicago) and Stephen Walt (Belfer Professor of International Relations and Academic Dean of Harvard University) in the U.S. that are willing to speak out. In March 2006, they wrote an article titled “The Israel Lobby” in which they question the United States policies in the Middle East. Here is a section of their article:

“Israel receives about \$3 billion in direct assistance each year, roughly one-fifth of the foreign aid budget, and worth about \$500 a year for every Israeli. This largesse is especially striking since Israel is now a wealthy industrial state with a per capita income roughly equal to that of South Korea or Spain.

“Other recipients get their money in quarterly instalments, but Israel receives its entire appropriation at the beginning of each fiscal year and can thus earn interest on it. Most recipients of aid given for military purposes are required to spend all of it in the US, but Israel is allowed to use roughly 25 per cent of its allocation to subsidise its own defence industry. It is the only recipient that does not have to account for how the aid is spent, which makes it virtually impossible to prevent the money from being used for purposes the US opposes, such as building settlements on the West Bank. Moreover, the US has provided Israel with nearly \$3 billion to develop weapons systems, and given it access to such top-drawer weaponry as Blackhawk helicopters and F-16 jets. Finally, the US gives

Israel access to intelligence it denies to its NATO allies and has turned a blind eye to Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

"Washington also provides Israel with consistent diplomatic support. Since 1982, the US has vetoed 32 Security Council resolutions critical of Israel, more than the total number of vetoes cast by all the other Security Council members. It blocks the efforts of Arab states to put Israel's nuclear arsenal on the IAEA's agenda. The US comes to the rescue in wartime and takes Israel's side when negotiating peace. The Nixon administration protected it from the threat of Soviet intervention and resupplied it during the October War. Washington was deeply involved in the negotiations that ended that war, as well as in the lengthy 'step-by-step' process that followed, just as it played a key role in the negotiations that preceded and followed the 1993 Oslo Accords. In each case there was occasional friction between US and Israeli officials, but the US consistently supported the Israeli position. One American participant at Camp David in 2000 later said: 'Far too often, we functioned . . . as Israel's lawyer.' Finally, the Bush administration's ambition to transform the Middle East is at least partly aimed at improving Israel's strategic situation." [10]

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt are not anti-Semites nor are they uninformed individuals. What they are saying is that United States' Middle Eastern policy is in the interest of Israel and counterproductive for the United States.

We now know that as soon as the Bush administration came to power, it started looking for an excuse to invade Iraq. It used every possible propaganda tool under the sun to get the UN to sanction the invasion of Iraq, and when it didn't succeed, it went ahead and invaded Iraq anyway. The people in the U.S. pushing for an invasion, the so called neocons were at the forefront of disseminating misinformation in anyway they could. But to understand part of their agenda we have to go back to 1996.

In 1996, the newly elected prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, commissioned a study group, called "Study Group on a New Israeli Strategy Toward 2000," to craft a strategy for Israel in the coming decades. The Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies' which included Richard Perle, James Colbert, Charles Fairbanks, Douglas Feith, Robert Loewenberg, David Wurmser, and Meyrav Wurmser, created Israel's strategy paper titled: "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm" [11].

The paper contains six pages of recommendations for Benjamin Netanyahu and some of the more relevant suggestions are presented below:

- We have for four years pursued peace based on a New Middle East. We in Israel cannot play innocents abroad in a world that is not innocent. Peace depends on the character and behaviour of our foes. We live in a dangerous neighbourhood, with fragile states and bitter rivalries. Displaying moral ambivalence between the effort to build a Jewish state and the desire to annihilate it by trading "land for peace" will not secure "peace now." Our claim to the land -- to which we have clung for hope for 2000 years -- is legitimate and noble. It is not within our own power, no matter how much we concede, to make peace unilaterally. Only the unconditional acceptance by Arabs of our rights, especially in their territorial dimension, "peace for peace," is a solid basis for the future.
- Syria challenges Israel on Lebanese soil. An effective approach, and one with which American can sympathize, would be if Israel seized the strategic initiative

along its northern borders by engaging Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran, as the principal agents of aggression in Lebanon, including by:

- striking Syria's drug-money and counterfeiting infrastructure in Lebanon, all of which focuses on Razi Qanan.
- paralleling Syria's behaviour by establishing the precedent that Syrian territory is not immune to attacks emanating from Lebanon by Israeli proxy forces.
- striking Syrian military targets in Lebanon, and should that prove insufficient, striking at select targets in Syria proper.
- Work closely with Turkey and Jordan to contain, destabilize, and roll-back some of its most dangerous threats. This implies clean break from the slogan, "comprehensive peace" to a traditional concept of strategy based on balance of power.
- Change the nature of its relations with the Palestinians, including upholding the right of hot pursuit for self-defence into all Palestinian areas and nurturing alternatives to Arafat's exclusive grip on Palestinian society.
- Given the nature of the regime in Damascus, it is both natural and moral that Israel abandon the slogan "comprehensive peace" and move to contain Syria, drawing attention to its weapons of mass destruction program, and rejecting "land for peace" deals on the Golan Heights.
- Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq -- an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right -- as a means of foiling Syria's regional ambitions. Jordan has challenged Syria's regional ambitions recently by suggesting the restoration of the Hashemites in Iraq. This has triggered a Jordanian-Syrian rivalry to which Asad has responded by stepping up efforts to destabilize the Hashemite Kingdom, including using infiltrations. Syria recently signalled that it and Iran might prefer a weak, but barely surviving Saddam, if only to undermine and humiliate Jordan in its efforts to remove Saddam.

It is interesting to note that many of the co-authors of this strategy paper are Jewish Americans and not Israelis. Below you will find a very short description of a few co-authors.

Richard Perle has served in important government posts under various administrations. He was Assistant Secretary of Defence in the Reagan administration and Chairman of the Defence Policy Advisory Committee (2001-2003) in the Bush II administration. He is also a signatory of the Project for the New American Century, a think tank and one of the main organisations pushing for invasion of Iran. Perle is currently a resident fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. He sits also on the board of advisors of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA).

Douglas Faith served as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy in the Bush II administration. Faith had previously served in the Reagan administration, starting off as Middle East specialist at the National Security Council (1981-82) and then transferring to the Defense Department, where he spent two years as staff lawyer for Assistant

Defense Secretary Richard Perle. He is the director of the Foundation for Jewish Studies, and former advisor to the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA).

David Wurmser, Dick Cheney's Middle East adviser, was the Special Adviser to Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton (2001–2003). He is also a member of the Board of directors of the U.S. Committee for a Free Lebanon.

One can produce a very long list of influential people in United States (e.g., Paul Wolfowitz -- current World Bank president and Undersecretary of Defence for Policy from 1989–93) that work very hard to safeguard Israel's interests.

Implementing Israel's Strategy

Since the election of George W. Bush, we see that this Israel strategy paper has served as a template for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Now let us examine each suggestion in the paper and the events in the Middle East.

1. Only the unconditional acceptance by Arabs of our rights, especially in their territorial dimension, "peace for peace," is a solid basis for the future.

During Mr. Bush's presidency, Israel has abandoned the concept of "Land for Peace" and concentrated instead on unilaterally drawing the borders of a future Palestine. This is being done by first constructing a so called "security wall" separating Israel from Palestine, and then declaring that wall as the international border separating the two states. The "Peace for Peace" means that Israel will increase the pressure on Palestinians by such a degree that Palestinians will come to Israel, hat in hand, begging not for land but for peace. In this way Israel will determine the size and shape of the future Palestinian state. This has been and is supported by United States. The current strangulation of the Palestinian Economy is part of that strategy.

2. An effective approach, and one with which American can sympathize, would be if Israel seized the strategic initiative along its northern borders by engaging Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran, as the principal agents of aggression in Lebanon.

This has been done through news media and United Nations where United States has tried hard to isolate Syria and even have put sanctions on the country. United States has also tried, by pressuring the Lebanese government, to isolate Hezbollah and reduce its power within the Lebanese society. Syria has claimed that former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated by Israeli agents to damage its reputation in Lebanon. It is interesting to note that this assassination was one of the main reasons that Syria was forced to leave Lebanon. It was also used to try to impose U.N. sanctions on Syria.

3. Work closely with Turkey and Jordan to contain, destabilize, and roll back some of its most dangerous threats. This implies clean break from the slogan, "comprehensive peace" to a traditional concept of strategy based on balance of power.

The Israel's relationship with Turkey prior to the Iraqi invasion was improving rapidly. Turkey knows that it needs United States backing in its negotiations with the European Union. It also needs United States' help in restructuring its 200+ billion dollar loans. Therefore for Turkey it was a good idea to accept a close partnership with Israel. Currently Israeli pilots carryout air exercises in Turkey and rumours have it that they even spy on Iran from Turkey.

Israel (behind the scene) has traditionally had a good relationship with Jordan. Israel hoped that after invasion of Iraq, the former crown prince Hassan of Jordan would become King of Iraq. The Jewish Daily Forward of New York reported on August 9 2002, the following:

“Several observers said some Bush administration officials are indeed rooting for Hassan at a time when Washington is struggling to find a consensus leader to succeed Saddam. After the London meeting, the London-based Guardian newspaper reported that Hassan had the backing of Pentagon hawks and that he met in April in Washington with one of their most prominent figures, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz.”

4. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq -- an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right.

Here we see that Israel's strategy as presented in the document is the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. Israel could not do this on its own. But again Israel didn't have to. United States achieved the strategic objective of Israel, without Israel spending a single dollar.

So far Israel has achieved most of its main objective except completely neutralising Hezbollah, Iran and Syria. Israel has been partly successful in weakening and isolating Syria, however, the Syrian government remains in place and still supports the Palestinians. The Iranian government is still there, supporting Syria, Hezbollah and the Palestinians. The main point of problem for the Israelis then is Iran. If Iran is neutralised, then no one is left to back Hezbollah, and Syria is left totally at the mercy of Israel. Then Israel can play the “Peace for Peace” game with Syria.

By occupying and breaking large centres of power in the Middle East such as Iraq and Iran, Israel will be left the dominating power for a very long time. Iraq is now fractured into many pieces and in the near future will not be able to support Palestinians in any meaningful way or cause Israel any problem. If Iran is also occupied and made into a federation, like Iraq, the internal strife will be such that it (Iran), too, will not be able to do anything.

Something for Israel and Something for the United States

But the architects of these wars have to, at the end of the day, have something tangible to show the American people for all the blood and money that United States has spent on these ventures. The answer of course is oil. Now that the war in Iraq has gone terribly wrong, and the threat to Iran has pushed oil prices to above \$70 per barrel, people are thinking that maybe it will not be a bad idea for the U.S. to do something to bring the prices down.

If the United States can occupy Iran, or at least change the regime in Iran to something that is subservient to American interests, then U.S. can have over half of the world's oil reserves under its control. There are four countries in the Middle East, that combined, have over 50 percent of the world's proven oil reserves. These countries are: Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The United States directly or indirectly controls three of the four countries, and if it can get the fourth, then it has its cake and can eat it too. But to control means to be close enough to be able to protect or threaten the governments in those countries. This necessitates the presence of American bases on those territories or close by.

The United States has bases in most of the Persian Gulf countries such as Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and now is planning permanent bases in Iraq. With regard to Iraq, the United State is trying to give the impression that it is interested in leaving as soon as possible, but all evidence points to the contrary.

Speaking to the United States' House Appropriations Subcommittee, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, "The presence in Iraq is for a very clear purpose, and that's to enable Iraqis to be able to govern themselves." She added, "I don't think that anybody believes that we really want to be there longer than we have to." [12]

Her comments were echoed by the US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad.

"US ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad said Saturday that his country did not want permanent military bases in Iraq and that he was willing to talk to Iran about the war-torn country's future.

"We want Iraq to stand on its own feet, we have no goal of establishing permanent bases here," he said in an interview with Iraq's Ash-Sharqiya television, according to a transcript obtained by AFP. [13].

But these statements are pure lies. There are a number of reports indicating that the United States is building large permanent military bases across Iraq.

A report in Newsweek said that the 38 square kilometres mini-city and airport in Balad was the evidence that American forces were preparing for to stay in Iraq for a long time.

Michael Hirsh of Newsweek wrote: "If you want an image of what America's long-term plans for Iraq look like, it's right here at Balad. Tucked away in a rural no man's land 43 miles north of Baghdad, this 15-square-mile mini-city of thousands of trailers and vehicle depots is one of four "super bases" where the Pentagon plans to consolidate U.S. forces, taking them gradually from the front lines of the Iraq war." [14]

At a White House press conference on 21 March, when President George W. Bush was asked if there would be a day when there were no more American forces in Iraq, he replied that that would be "decided by future presidents and future governments of Iraq," suggesting that the US would continue the occupation of Iraq for years, if not decades, to come.

On 2 April this year, the Independent wrote: "The Pentagon has revealed that coalition forces are spending millions of dollars establishing at least six "enduring" bases in Iraq – raising the prospect that U.S. and U.K. forces could be involved in a long-term deployment in the country. It said it assumed British troops would operate one of the bases." [15]

In addition to the bases, the U.S. is building the world's largest embassy in Baghdad.

Iran's Nuclear Weapons

Let us be clear about this: Iran (unlike Israel, Pakistan, India, and self-declared North Korea) does not possess nuclear weapons. Everyone, even in Washington, agrees on this. Even US Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte estimates that in spite of Iran's declaration that it has managed to enrich uranium, Iran will not have a bomb within four to nine years from now.

The main argument against Iran is that Iran is enriching uranium. Under the "Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" (NPT) [16], all members are guaranteed the right to enrich uranium.

Article four of the treaty states that: "Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with articles I and II of this Treaty."

This clearly gives Iran and other member states the right to do research and enrich uranium. So what Iran is doing is totally legal. In contrast we see that all the nuclear states such as Great Britain, Russia, China, France, and United States are in violation of this treaty. The treaty clearly states that nuclear powers have to disarm.

"Desiring to further the easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between States in order to facilitate the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons, the liquidation of all their existing stockpiles, and the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery pursuant to a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

Not only have the nuclear powers not reduced their nuclear weapon research and development activities but some openly threaten non-nuclear states with nuclear weapons.

President Bush constantly reminds us that he considers using nuclear weapons against Iran. For example on 12 April, Reuters reported that Bush once again had refused to rule out nuclear strikes on Iran.

"President Bush refused on Tuesday to rule out nuclear strikes against Iran if diplomacy fails to curb the Islamic Republic's atomic ambitions . . .

"Speculation about a U.S. attack has mounted since a report in New Yorker magazine said this month that Washington was mulling the option of using tactical nuclear weapons to knock out Iran's subterranean nuclear sites." [17]

Even French President Jacques Chirac has stated that his country will use nuclear weapons to "safeguard" French "interests." In an address to the strategic submarine forces (FOST) at the Ile Longue nuclear submarine base in Brittany on 19 January, Chirac said the "perception" of the country's "vital interests" had changed with the world's growing interdependence. "For example, the guarantee of our strategic supplies or the defence of our allies are, among others, interests that are to be protected," he said. Chirac said it is up to the president of the Republic—himself, until at least next year to determine whether a given "aggression, threat, or unacceptable blackmail" has consequences that bring it within France's "vital interests" and thus could unleash the nuclear deterrent. [18]

This is very interesting since none of these countries are threatened and they state very clearly that they want to use nuclear weapons to protect their "interests."

While Iran is being threatened with sanctions, military invasion and nuclear attack, others are rewarded for going nuclear. India, which has not even signed the NPT and has tested nuclear weapons, is rewarded with access to new nuclear technologies, weapons and even lucrative trade deals.

Pakistan the creator of the Taliban and home of the infamous Dr. A.Q. Khan -- black market nuclear technology salesman -- is similarly rewarded with brand new F16s (capable of delivering nuclear weapons) and financial aid.

Israel's 200-plus nuclear bombs are the best known secret in the world. On 12 October 2003, the Guardian newspaper reported that Israeli and American officials have admitted deploying U.S.-supplied Harpoon cruise missiles armed with nuclear warheads in Israel's fleet of Dolphin-class submarines.

"Israeli and American officials have admitted collaborating to deploy US-supplied Harpoon cruise missiles armed with nuclear warheads in Israel's fleet of Dolphin-class submarines, giving the Middle East's only nuclear power the ability to strike at any of its Arab neighbours.

"The unprecedented disclosure came as Israel announced that states 'harbouring terrorists' are legitimate targets, responding to Syria's declaration of its right to self-defence should Israel bomb its territory again." [19]

We all know that US, UK, France and even peaceful Norway helped Israel to develop nuclear weapons.

And then we have the Brazilian nuclear activities to consider. The Associated Press reported on 22 April: "The government-run Industrias Nucleares do Brasil S A has been conducting final tests at the enrichment plant, built on a former coffee plantation in Resende, 145 km west of Rio de Janeiro. When it opens this year, Brazil will join the world's nuclear elite." [20] So where are the IAEA, and Security Council? Brazil is doing exactly the same thing that Iran is.

Let us face the truth, just like Iraq, all the talk about Iranian nuclear activities is a smoke screen for something else. The most likely answer is a combination of the United States strategic interest in oil, containment of China and Israel's interests. But in 2006, governments are understandably shy about mentioning neo-colonialism and greed as the reasons for invading other countries.

Footnotes

[1] USA Today, "War game will focus on situation with Iran," April 4, 2006

[2] Washington Post, "The Pentagon Preps for Iran," Sunday, April 16, 2006

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