

PREVENT THE NEXT WAR NOW: Top 10 Reasons NOT to Attack Iran



In a strategy eerily reminiscent of the buildup to the Iraq War, the Bush Administration has continued to employ overheated and confrontational rhetoric towards Iran, using a host of unsubstantiated arguments about nuclear weapons and terrorism to prop up the ghoulish image of an “Iranian threat.”

Despite immense popular dissatisfaction with the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, speculations, only mildly disputed by the Administration, about the possibilities of a U.S. attack on Iran have been growing in strength and number. And despite some strong voices of opposition, as a whole, Congress has only fueled the saber rattling.

But a U.S. strike on Iran would be an act of war with disastrous consequences for Iran, for the Middle East, and for us. If our elected representatives won't see reason, then we must step up to convince them that diplomacy is the real solution.

A U.S. attack on Iran would:

1. Cause immense human suffering in Iran

While most plans for a potential strike on Iran call for targeting specific nuclear facilities, many of these facilities are in urban areas, and the locations of others are still unknown. Any strike on these facilities would result in many hundreds, if not thousands of civilian casualties. If Iran chose to defend itself with a military response, the resulting conflict would lead to thousands more casualties.

2. Create great instability in the entire Middle East

Iran would certainly see such a strike as an act of war and would likely retaliate in kind. While Iran might not be capable of an attack on American soil, it could easily attack American troops in Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Gulf or anywhere else in the region. Iran could easily use its regional influence to embroil U.S. allies in the Middle East in their own localized conflicts. Even if the U.S. were able to counterattack and overwhelm the Iranian military, the damage and instability created by such a situation would cause havoc in the Middle East for decades.

3. Be a breach of international law

Article 2, sections 3 and 4 of the UN Charter explicitly prohibit preventive military action by any country against any other, stating that: “all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.” In the absence of any direct and demonstrable Iranian threat against the U.S., a U.S. attack on Iran would be blatantly illegal.

4. Weaken the democratic and reform movements that do currently exist in Iran

With the current government already using the fear of a “threat from abroad” to bolster their conservative agenda of suppressing “subversive” elements at home, an attack on Iran would only give the Iranian government full reign to crack down on reformists, dissidents and opposition groups. The ensuing political polarization would further constrict the ability of these groups to operate on behalf of human rights within Iran, effectively forcing them either to side with the Islamic Republic or risk being shut down.

5. Consolidate broader public support within Iran for the conservatives and extremists now in power

Anti-nuclear opinions and reformist opposition have already dwindled in the face of U.S. and Israeli threat’s against Iran’s legally guaranteed right to nuclear power. Any attack on Iran would certainly only cement support for the most hard-line elements in the Iranian government, as the Iranian people rallied in patriotic support for their threatened country.

6. Damage the U.S.’s image in the Middle East and throughout the world

An attack on Iran would intensify anti-Americanism in Iran and in the Middle East more generally and destroy the opportunity for cultural engagement with the Iranian people—currently one of the populations least hostile to Americans in the region. When the U.S. invaded Iraq without the approval of the UN Security Council, many saw that attack as an unjustified act of preventive war, and our reputation has suffered because of it. To initiate another war in Iran would further isolate and condemn the U.S. in the eyes of the international community.

7. Prolong U.S. troop presence in the Middle East

Although a preventive strike on Iran might at first be confined to air strikes, as the conflict escalated, the U.S. would certainly have to begin committing troops on the ground, thus directly endangering more American lives. We would have to send yet

more personnel to the region, and the terms of many troops already in Iraq and Afghanistan would most likely be extended yet again.

8. Harm U.S. and global oil interests

Any U.S. – Iran conflict in the Middle East would not only interrupt commerce in the region, but would also be detrimental to the entire, oil-dependent global economy. Forty-five percent of the world’s oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf; an easy target of retaliation by Iran’s military. Such a situation would enormously exacerbate already high gas prices and serious fuel shortages worldwide.

9. Further strain the already overburdened U.S. economy

After five years in Iraq, the U.S. has already spent over \$500 billion on the war, and continues to spend \$275 million a day. With the U.S. economy faltering, the domestic housing market collapsing, and budget cuts affecting education, healthcare and other basic services nationwide, can we really afford another war?

10. Solve none of the issues proffered as grounds for such a strike

No attack could obliterate all of Iran’s nuclear technology (especially if there are clandestine facilities) or knowledge of the enrichment process. Even supporters of such a plan admit that, at best, a preventive strike could set Iran’s pursuit of nuclear technology back five years. Far from giving the U.S. government greater control over the state of Iran’s nuclear program, Iran could use such an attack as an excuse for invoking Article 10 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which gives each party the right to withdraw from the treaty if it decides that events “have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country.” Iran could then halt cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and all UN inspectors completely. Furthermore, as international sympathy for their plight grew and their own internal reformists weakened, a preventive strike might only make the Iranian government more likely to seek a nuclear weapon in the face of an imminent threat.

Prevent the Next War NOW! Express your opposition to a U.S. attack on Iran by holding your elected officials accountable. Educate your community, pass city peace resolutions, lobby local and congressional representatives.

Institute for Policy Studies (Iran in the Crosshairs 2008), Trita Parsi: The Alternative to an Israeli Attack on Iran (July 2, 2008), the National Priorities Project, Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran (Twenty Reasons Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran 2007), the United Nations Charter (1945)

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