

The Just Cause: The Gathering Storm

It is 1938 all over again. Then, Germany under Adolf Hitler was on the march. The Nazi regime was rearming in violation of the Versailles Treaty and international obligations. Hitler was gradually expanding Germany's power over Europe. Moreover, the German dictator had spelled out his objectives in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler's goals were as evil as they were clear: The destruction of European Jewry; the creation of a new racial world order based on Aryan supremacy; and the triumph of National Socialism over Western liberal democracy and Soviet communism. In short, Hitler sought a pan-German world empire. He knew the only way to achieve it was through war.

But the West did not believe him—or rather, refused to believe him. Instead, European policy-makers and pundits were convinced Hitler was a rational, conventional German statesman. They argued he could be accommodated and ultimately appeased. Hence, they signed the infamous Munich agreement, which ceded Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland to Germany. Britain's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared he had achieved "peace in our time." Instead, the only thing he achieved was to give Hitler more time to consolidate his position, thereby enabling the Nazi leader to conquer most of the Continent. The West's leaders were wrong; their policy of appeasement only emboldened Hitler. The results were as calamitous as they were unnecessary: Europe reduced to rubble, the Holocaust, and the deaths of over 50 million. All of it could have been avoided had the West stood up to Hitler in 1938.

It is the same today with Iran. Tehran's Ayatollahs are determined to dominate the greater Middle East. They have been arming, financing and training their proxies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories. They have transformed Syria into a client state. They are sending weapons to the Taliban in Afghanistan. Iran is on the march.

Most ominously, Tehran's mullahs are on the verge of developing nuclear weapons. Israel, British and American intelligence sources confirm that Tehran is about 12-18 months away from acquiring the nuclear bomb. The Islamic regime is also purchasing medium- and long-range ballistic missiles from North Korea, Russia and China. Therefore, Iran will have the capability to not only destroy its neighbors, but target European cities like London, Paris and Berlin. The bomb will give Iran's ruling elite what it craves most: international status as a great military

power and the means to finally export the Islamic revolution across the Middle East and the world.

A nuclear arsenal will enable Iran to impose its will on countries in the region. Iran will also be able to intimidate and blackmail the European Union into acquiescing to its demands.

Just like Hitler, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has made his intentions crystal clear. He has called for "Israel to be wiped off the map." Although he denies the Holocaust occurred, Ahmadinejad vows he will do what Hitler failed to achieve: destroy the Jews and their civilization. And again, like Hitler, Ahmadinejad's aims are not simply regional in scope. His goal is nothing less than a new Muslim world empire anchored in Tehran—what Ahmadinejad calls "a world without America."

The fatal flaw of the European leaders in their dealings with Hitler was that they misunderstood his fundamental nature. At his core, he was a revolutionary and a radical nationalist, who was bent on global domination. The choice confronting the West was a simple one: submit or fight. There was no third alternative, such as negotiations, because Hitler—like all revolutionaries—was not interested in compromise. His goals were unlimited and absolute.

The same holds true for Ahmadinejad. He is a revolutionary and a radical Islamist, who is determined to bring about an apocalypse in order to usher in the 12th Imam, or the so-called "perfect human being," which will pave the way for a global Muslim caliphate predicted by the Shiite mullahs in Tehran. He is a religious fanatic. He believes his divinely ordained mission is to help unleash a nuclear holocaust (preferably with Israel) in order to achieve a final victory for Islam.

And just like 1938, Europe's leaders believe they can negotiate with this Islamofascist. For over three-and-a-half years, Germany, Britain and France have dangled diplomatic and economic carrots in a futile effort to convince Tehran to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Now, the West believes sanctions may force Iran to heel. But they won't work. Iran is too strong, too rich in oil and too determined to be stopped from achieving its dream of becoming a nuclear power. Moreover, as long as Russia and China continue to veto comprehensive sanctions at the United Nations Security Council, there is no possibility of implementing the kind of harsh international economic penalties that can force the mullahs to change course.

There is, however, one major difference between today's situation and 1938: The Jews will not go quietly into the ovens. Having suffered one Holocaust, they are determined to do whatever it takes to stop a second one. If necessary, Israel will launch massive air strikes to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities. But Israeli sources say the chances are high that Tel Aviv will not be able to successfully hit every major site (many of these are located in underground bunkers).

This leaves the United States. American air power can smash Iran's nuclear capabilities in an intense bombing campaign. The diplomatic, economic and geopolitical fallout will be immense—suicide attacks from Hezbollah and Hamas against American installations; boiling rage in the Arab street; the global price of oil will skyrocket, sending shocks throughout the world economy; and U.S. troops will face waves of terrorist reprisals from Shiite insurgents in Iraq. Yet, as John McCain has argued, there is only one thing worse than bombing Iran and that is allowing Iran to get the bomb.

This is why Washington must assist the pro-democracy forces in Iran. Tehran's theocracy is resented by many segments of society. Iranians have become disgusted with their country's international isolation, the economic mismanagement and rampant corruption of the mullahs, the rationing of basic necessities like gasoline, and the religious totalitarianism affecting every aspect of life. There is a growing anti-regime movement that consists of a disparate coalition—students, trade unions, disaffected religious and ethnic minorities, nationalists, and women's groups—that the United States can help galvanize into a potent political force. Before opting for a military strike, the Bush administration could do in Iran what Ronald Reagan did to the Soviet Union when he supported Poland's Solidarity movement: use internal discontent to trigger regime change. So far, the United States has failed to reach out to Iran's long-suffering dissidents. If nothing dramatic is done by the end of this year, there will be no other option left but the military one. Time is slowly running out.

The West refuses to accept that war with Iran is probably inevitable—just as it refused to accept in 1938 that war with Nazi Germany was inevitable. But in all likelihood war is coming. The longer the West waits, the more it strengthens Iran's hand to wreak havoc on Israel, the wider Middle East and Western civilization itself.

Ahmadinejad is the Hitler of our day. He represents a mortal threat to international security and civilized values. Yet as we dither, he has already declared war on the

United States. Iran is supporting Shiite death squads in Iraq who are murdering American troops on a daily basis. Tehran is sending jihadist fighters into Iraq with the deliberate goal of breaking America's will through a protracted guerrilla campaign. Iran's Ayatollahs are hoping to inflict a humiliating defeat on the United States; they want to bleed us to the point where we withdraw from Iraq. This will create a power vacuum that Tehran will fill, and thereby transform Iraq, with its vast oil wealth, into another Syria, Lebanon and Gaza—a political and economic vassal to be used in Iran's relentless campaign against the West.

The question that must be answered is: In the face of Iran's murderous actions against U.S. troops, why has the Bush administration remained so passive? Why has it allowed Iran to kill our troops with impunity? The American government's greatest mistake in Iraq has not been sending enough troops, or promoting democracy in that war-torn land, or failing to get regional powers like Turkey, Syria and Saudi Arabia to sign on to the U.S. mission there; rather, Bush failed to realize that taking on Saddam Hussein would require the United States to take on Iran as well. Any attempt to drain the swamps of the Middle East that allow terrorism to fester and grow required the removal of the region's two most venomous serpents: Saddam and Iran's mullahs. The road to Baghdad goes through Tehran. Much of our current difficulties in Iraq are due to Iran's imperialist meddling. The people of Iraq have voted repeatedly and at great personal risk for a sovereign, pluralistic democracy; once Tehran is toppled we will find that al Qaeda and the Baathists are no match for American and Iraqi military might. They will be trounced the same way the Taliban and al Qaeda were in Afghanistan.

If Bush is really serious about winning the war in Iraq, he should do the one thing that will guarantee victory: take out Iran's Ayatollahs. Moreover, if he is really serious about defending American interests and American values he should reject the Europeans' policy of appeasement. It failed with Hitler; and it has failed with Ahmadinejad.

The clock is ticking. It is back to 1938. We should not wait until it strikes midnight September 1, 1939. For by then, it will be too late to avert another world war—and this time, there will be no winners.

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