

Iran and the nuclear question

An anarchist view from Britain

Anarcho

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The Iraq WMD farce has not stopped Bush and Blair attacking Iran using the same arguments: **Double standards a-go-go!**

The powers that be, along with their media, seem to be assuming that the public has the memory span of a Goldfish with their campaign against Iran. It seems ironic that governments which glorified in ignoring the UN and world opinion by invading Iraq should now turn round and cite “defiance of the international community” as a crime worthy of sanctions, the threat of air strikes or even war.

And what is this “the international community”? The world, like any individual country, is divided between those with and without power. Those with power dictate to those without. Who is and is not in that “community” depends on the needs of the powerful state. When the US and UK ignored the world and invaded Iraq, they were the “international community.” If a state follows America’s lead, then it is part of the international community; if not then it stands in “defiance.” The “international community” is what most people would think it is: it is a euphemism used to cloak imperialist ambitions and whatever alliances it requires.

This can be seen with Iran. Israel’s previous seeking and their current holding of nuclear weapons is not worthy of note, in spite that state’s repeated ignoring of UN resolutions and world opinion. And if Israel can have nuclear weapons, why not Iran? It does have a case, after all. Iran is surrounded by nuclear powers. To the east are Pakistan and India, to the north is Russia and to its west, Israel. Its immediate neighbours, Afghanistan and Iraq, are occupied by an American state not only armed with nuclear weapons and but with a long history of aggression (direct or by proxy – America backed Saddam’s 1980 invasion of Iran). Can we say that such a state has “no right” to nuclear defence? Or is that club dependent on whether the US approves of the regime or not?

Not that we should be even discussing this. It is important to stress that there is no evidence that Iran has a nuclear weapons programme or that it has done anything illegal. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other agencies say it is not. The IAEA, let us not forget, was the body which was sent into Iraq to find Saddam’s WMD and found nothing. Bush and Blair declared that this was further evidence that Iraq was hiding its weapons and invaded. Subsequent searches have shown that the IAEA was correct. So what do they know?

There have been some claims by the intelligence services of the US and UK, but after the Iraq WMD debacle we know how to treat them. Even assuming that there was strong, independently verified, evidence of such a desire the fact is that Iran is no position to build such weapons for at least a decade. So this is the same kind of phoney crisis concocted to justify aggression for imperial interests as we suffered in the run up to the invasion of Iraq

The double standards are staggering. America leads the world in developing WMD, including nukes. In the UK Iran's desire to develop nuclear power for civilian use is dismissed as little more than a front for more nefarious aims (Iran being the world's fourth largest oil exporter and so has no need for such energy sources). It is ironic that this argument is raised now, when Blair himself defends expanding UK use of nuclear power by arguing that oil is a finite resource and we need alternative energy sources to bridge an "energy gap." Why the arguments of one oil producing state are derided when another is praised is not hard to fathom. Not only that, but Blair is also in favour of developing a new generation of nuclear weapons. Iran is prohibited from developing nuclear weapons under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, but so is the British government. However, that is not stopping Blair breaching of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), by ordering a £25 billion replacement for the Trident nuclear weapons system. Can that man not open his mouth without some kind of hypocrisy spewing forth?

We can quite agree that a repressive regime like Iran should not pursue nuclear weapons. No state, regardless of how liberal it is, should have such destructive power. We can also agree that Iran should not pursue nuclear power. No state should do so because nuclear power is an extremely a bad idea. However, it is double-standards of the highest level for Britain to attack Iran while doing both and flouting the NPT while they are at it! But the NPT is a highly flexible law. Britain and America did not act when Israel, India and Pakistan developed nuclear bombs. Nor was the latter penalised when it disseminated its technology in defiance of sanctions. So nuclear proliferation is fine, as long as we (or our allies) do it. And have we forgotten that old chestnut, Mutually Assured Destruction? Surely the Cold Warriors of the West should be urging Iran to arm itself in order to stop the possibility war? But logic never was a strong point for the state or its supporters.

It does seem that New Labour cannot open its collective mouth without insulting the intelligence of those unfortunate to hear them. Jack Straw, for example, has said that Iran has a history of concealment and deception. The same thing was said of Iraq. They could at least consult a thesaurus! Moreover, it is a bit rich coming from a government that refuses to let the public see key information (like the legal advice on which it went to war with Iraq) and that lies habitually (like WMDs in Iraq).

So in spite of the Iraq debacle, the government and media are using "intelligence" reports about Iran's nuclear programme, along with missile, biological and chemical weapon development. Can we look forward to Condi Rice doing a Colin Powell at the UN soon? That may be a step too far. Regardless, what counts is how willing the media is to repeat the state's spin. An intelligent person, informed (at the very least) by the fall out of the Iraq invasion, should have no illusions on the factual basis of "intelligence" reports currently being produced to justify imperial interests. Sadly, the role of the media is such that such basic common sense has little place in it.

So we can expect the same process of scaring the people to begin again. The only major difference is that Iran will replace Iraq (indeed, the same speeches could be reused after a quick "Find and Replace" has been done). The same "experts" will appear on TV, bolstered by Iranian exile groups talking about human rights violations (similar groups from US client regimes will,

of course, be ignored). Opinion pieces in the newspapers will provoke worried editorials. Iraq will be forgotten, bar the occasional letter or opinion piece which will provoke outraged replies that Bush and Blair have learned their lessons and this time we can trust them. Come the US elections, the Republicans paint the Democrats as weak on terror in an attempt to overcome the burden imposed by the reality of 6 years of their rule.

And after that? Perhaps Iran will be quietly dropped as the US military machine is in no position to wage another war. The current one is unfinished for a start. Objectively, it looks impossible for the US to attack Iraq. Its army is bogged down in Iraq. Even if the Iraq situation improved, the US needs to recover from being overstretched there before it can go on other imperialist conquests. Even then, Iraq hangs heavy: it cannot occupy a smaller country impoverished by years of sanctions, how will it invade and occupy Iraq? What about air strikes? Again, unlikely as co-religionists in Iraq would make life difficult for the troops there if the US bomb Iran. Given how badly the situation is now with a Sunni insurgency, adding a Shiite one would be the final nail in the occupation's coffin. Not to mention that US occupying troops are exposed to Iranian reprisals.

So war is not a definite. Yet the Bush Junta's handling of everything, but particularly the Middle East, is inept and inefficient. Bush's silly and opportunistic rhetoric about the "axis of evil" helped bury whatever reformist movement there was in Iran by making it easy for hardliners to paint it as "objectively pro-American." The election which brought the current muppet to office there proved this. However, logic and reality have never stopped the Bush Junta before.

One factor which may stop them is a vigorous peace movement which, unlike the one in the run up to the Iraq invasion, is willing to turn words into (direct) action and, through protests, occupations, strikes and demonstrations stop the war machine at home. Sadly, though, no such peace movement exists and, given what does exist and the weakness of the anarchist movement, it seems unlikely one will develop — unless we try and build one.

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