What’s at stake: a world free of war and the threat of war.

“It has been a mainstay of this book that successful antiwar movements are those that have been able to make direct links with those in the flight path of US aggression and to bring their struggles and concerns directly into the US political arena. Indeed, direct comprehension of their urgent struggles has often been a radicalizing factor in antiwar campaigns.” Richard Seymour, *American Insurgents: A Brief History of American Anti-Imperialism* (2012). p. 193.

J. William Fulbright during the height of the Cold War attempted to extend his Exchange Program to the Soviet Union, but his plan to acquire a part of WWII Lend Lease money the Russians were repaying was scuttled by US Sovietphobes. See *The Price of Empire*. Another Arkansas native, Betty Bumpers, wife of then Senator Bumpers, created the women’s organization, Peace Links, to exchange women from the US and Russia and other countries. Today we need direct nonviolent citizen contact with “enemy” nations, including exchanges with all nations our leaders perceive to be “evil.”
Here is the link to all the newsletters archived in the OMNI web site.

[http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/](http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/) These newsletters offer information that enables us to examine morality and judgment of our leaders and their policies, of power. Here is the link to the Index: [http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/](http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/)

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READ MORE

The Iranophobia Lobby Machine

BY ELI CLIFTON AND ALI GHARIB, THE NATION, JULY 17, 2014 [August 4/11. –Dick]

Neocon think tanks get millions from wealthy donors, which they use to game the system, buy influence — and push for regime change.

DOUG CHAKA/THE NATION [Enemies of Iran Gather in Washington]

In the basement of Washington's swank Mandarin Oriental Hotel on a balmy spring day, the conference guests were finishing up their boxed lunches as the conversation shifted to their host's pet topic — Iran. The Foundation for Defense of Democracies, perhaps DC's premier neoconservative think tank, had gathered donors, supporters, press, and other interested parties for a two-day meeting on Middle East policy. And some of the Hill's most rapacious hawks for sanctions on Iran were in the room that day to receive awards.

The moderator, a veteran Bloomberg reporter, hailed FDD executive director Mark Dubowitz as "the architect of many of the sanctions we have against Iran right now, who advised Congress on how to draft that legislation and has also advised Treasury and the White House on his opinions about sanctions." The praise was telling. Although Dubowitz tried to give credit to Congress, the White House and the departments of Treasury and State, groups like the FDD play an outsize role in shaping policy on the delicate and potentially explosive issue of
Since the moderate Hassan Rouhani was elected president of Iran last June, the Obama administration has engaged in an intensive round of diplomacy aimed at placing permanent curbs on that program. The talks have progressed further than anyone expected, with an interim deal in November that set a late July deadline for reaching a final accord. On Capitol Hill, though, diplomacy has been dismissed by a parade of influential naysaying hawks. And these organizations are already talking up ways of making sure that a deal, if one is reached, is dead on arrival.

Within Washington’s corridors of power, the institution that has done the most to focus attention on the alleged Iranian nuclear threat — Congress — has also been among the most skeptical when it comes to using diplomacy to do anything about it. But the members of Congress don’t come up with these ideas on their own. A handful of organizations — especially the FDD, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) — do most of the legwork in shaping policy. An even smaller network of right-wing donors funds these groups (see the sidebar for more).

Over the past decade, this small network of advocates has become incredibly effective at getting its way. A 2010 bill slapping sanctions on foreign banks and companies doing business — especially oil business — with Iran passed the Senate 99–0, and a 2011 amendment sanctioning international companies dealing with Iran’s Central Bank passed 100–0. In 2012, another sanctions amendment passed the Senate 94–0, and a 2013 resolution backing Israel should it attack Iran was passed 99–0. “By far and away the most powerful voices are what you can term the hawkish groups on Iran policy,” says a former congressional aide.

In the boxing ring that is Washington, the match-up isn’t even. Compare, for example, the budgets of groups that oppose diplomacy with those that support it. Four of Washington’s pro-diplomacy groups are significant players on the Hill: the Center for a New American Security, the National Iranian American Council, the American Iranian Council and the Council on American-Islamic Relations. According to their most recent tax filings, these organizations boasted an annual combined budget of approximately $9.4 million.

Meanwhile, the latest tax filings for just two of the groups that push hardline policies, the FDD and AIPAC, have a combined budget of approximately $75 million. And that doesn’t include
the annual budget of an AIPAC offshoot, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy ($8.7 million), or aggressive right-wing PR groups like United Against Nuclear Iran ($1.6 million), whose spokespeople are regularly quoted by national media.

All that cash helps produce papers and reports advising Congress, flashy DC conferences and other ways of accessing power. For example, a more modestly funded dovish group might request a meeting with members of Congress, but some members will meet only with advocates who bring along a constituent, which could require buying a plane ticket. "That's obviously easier for lobby groups that have a lot of money, because they can fly someone out," says Kate Gould, a lobbyist with the pro-diplomacy Friends Committee on National Legislation.

The hawkish groups skillfully work the Hill with regular briefings and frequent contacts with staffers. Their battalions of policy analysts and lawyers "package [sanctions] bills and hand them to congressional offices," says the former Hill aide. They also assiduously ply the mainstream media, regularly providing op-eds and quotes in news coverage. In other words, this is a full-scale operation: the hawks generate the ideas, translate them into policy, shepherd bills through Congress, and celebrate their passage.

To see how deeply these groups have influenced Congress, one need only glance at the docket of House and Senate committee hearings on Iran. It's at these hearings that members of Congress vie to burnish their credentials as being tough on Iran, calling for ever harsher sanctions. "Congressional hearings are not weighted to be some objective analysis of some foreign policy issue," says the former congressional aide. "The people who are calling the hearings have an agenda."

Since November 2012, eleven separate hearings on Iran policy have considered a total of thirty-six expert testimonies from outside groups. Of that number, two neoconservative organizations dominated: FDD fellows made five appearances, and those from the AEI had four. Neoconservative allies like David Albright, who co-chairs a nonproliferation group with Dubowitz and spoke before Congress four times in this period, also gave testimony. All told, people associated with groups taking a hard line on Iran sanctions accounted for twenty-two of the thirty-six testimonies solicited by House and Senate committees.

Centrist think tanks, on the other hand, were underrepresented. Employees of the Council on Foreign Relations testified twice, while the Brookings Institution, the RAND Corporation, the
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Center for Strategic and International Studies fielded only one witness apiece over the period reviewed by The Nation. Experts from dovish think tanks hardly appeared at all: the only witness from such a group, Barak Barfi of the generally left-of-center New America Foundation, made one appearance.

Since 2010, when the GOP retook the House, the Foreign Affairs Committee has been led by hard-liners. Florida's über-aggressive Ileana Ros-Lehtinen was replaced last year by California's Ed Royce, who is only slightly less extreme. In 2013, Royce's committee unanimously approved legislation that the FDD helped write — and that AIPAC has backed — which would tighten the screws on Iran, giving "the ayatollah a choice between the collapse of his economy or compromise on his nuclear weapons program and giving up that program," in Royce's words. The bill came to a full House vote at the end of July, just days before Rouhani's inauguration.  MORE

http://www.theinvestigativefund.org/investigations/politicsandgovernment/2002/the_iranophobia_lobby_machine

Eli Clifton is a reporting fellow with The Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute who focuses on money in politics and US foreign policy. He previously reported for the American Independent New Network, ThinkProgress, and Inter Press Service. Clifton is coauthor of the Center for American Progress's report "Fear Inc.: The Roots...

Ali Gharib is a reporting fellow with The Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute, where he focuses on US foreign policy. He previously served as a senior editor at Open Zion, a Mideast blog at the Daily Beast. His pieces have appeared in Foreign Policy, Washington Monthly, ...

PEACE ACTION, DIPLOMACY

Dear Dick,

Like clockwork, opponents of diplomacy are back at work trying to throw a wrench in the recently extended nuclear negotiations with Iran.

Members of Congress who fear losing the upper hand at the negotiating table are pressing for even more sanctions. But instead of gaining leverage, a move like this only would give Iranian
hardliners a reason to get up and walk away--and likely get back on track toward a nuclear weapon.

We must do all we can to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran without perpetuating war in the Middle East and putting even more American lives at risk.

Sign our petition to Congress: don’t wreck diplomacy with Iran.

This potentially historic deal would make our world safer and more secure; more sanctions could mean the end of diplomacy, more war in the Middle East, a nuclear-armed Iran, or all three. You’ve helped us push back on Congress's attempts to scuttle these important talks before, and we can do it again. If you agree, tell Congress by signing our petition!

Thanks for making your voice heard.

Sincerely,

Angela Canterbury & John Isaacs

Council for a Livable World

322 4th Street, NE

Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear James Bennett,

With U.S. bombs dropping in Iraq and Syria, the fall of 2014 might seem like a dark time for nonviolence and diplomacy. But, just out of national headlines, negotiators with Iran are quietly making history. A year ago, the U.S. and Iran were barely on speaking terms. Now, we’re just months away from a long-term deal on Iran’s nuclear program. That's diplomacy at work.

Looking at the crises of this fall, it's clear that we need to lift up diplomacy and engagement as an alternative to bombing and more violence. Your calls and letters are critically important, but I want you to take it a step further: come to Washington and lobby with us for diplomacy this November.

Register now for the Quaker Public Policy Institute and Lobby Day on November 20-21.

This year’s lobby day is just days before the deadline for a nuclear deal with Iran, and there's no better time to remind Congress that diplomacy works. It's the best way to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons, and it's the best way to keep the U.S. from entering yet another war.
Join us in Washington, DC for two days of trainings, panels and lobbying. We're excited to welcome special guest Parker Palmer, acclaimed author of *Healing the Heart of Democracy*. He'll be joined by Col. Lawrence Wilkerson—former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell—who champions diplomacy on and off the Hill.

I hope you'll be able to join us. If you're not ready to register yet, [get more information about the Quaker Public Policy Institute.](#)

We already know that the best path to a safer and more peaceful world is through diplomacy. Congress needs to hear it.

Sincerely,

Jim Cason  
Associate Executive Secretary  
Strategic Advocacy

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**SUPPORT DIPLOMACY WITH IRAN**

**From:** Sara Haghdoosti <noreply@list.moveon.org>  

**Subject:** Will you add your name?  

**Date:** July 24, 2014 at 3:06:17 PM PDT
Dear Art -

The extreme flank of the Republican party is trying to undermine the President’s diplomacy with Iran. Over the last few days, two bills have been introduced in the Senate and House. One calls for increasing sanctions on Iran the other attempts to tie the President’s hands in regards to the negotiations. If passed, these bills would undermine the Iran/US negotiations and drag us down the path of another senseless war in the Middle East.

At the moment these bills are only getting traction within the Republican party. Here’s the thing though - if these voices continue to be the only ones in the debate they will push legislators away from reasonable policies that support the President’s diplomacy and towards more hawkish measures.

That’s where we come in. On Monday over 21 Berim members from all over the country will be flying to DC. They’ll be meeting with their representatives and telling them why they support diplomacy with Iran. For their words to have impact, Members of Congress need to know that these Berim members are not alone.

Can you add your name to the petition and show that there is overwhelming support for diplomacy?

We need to ensure that our voices are a continued presence in this debate so that we can push representatives to take positive stances as opposed to moving from terrible legislative options to bad ones.

It doesn’t matter where your representative stands personally - your voices still have impact. If they’re supportive, your petitions will show them that we stand along side them. If they’re on the fence, it could help them find the courage to speak out in favor of diplomacy. If they’re against, showing them that they’re disconnected from their voters may convince them to stay silent on the issue.

We only have a few days before the peace delegation flies into DC - so please spread the word by forwarding this email to friends and family so our petition will be as strong as it possibly can be.

Yours -

Sara on behalf of the Berim team.
Dear James Bennett,

This weekend, we learned that negotiations with Iran have been extended for an additional four months. These negotiations have already had positive results.

But Congress could sabotage this progress if it ties the hands of U.S. negotiators. Please write a letter today in support of these negotiations. In your letter, call on your members of Congress to speak out for diplomacy with Iran.

The world is already farther from a nuclear-armed Iran and the risk of another U.S. war in the Middle East thanks to the success of the negotiations. The preliminary nuclear accord, which will now last through late November, has established the most extensive verification program in history. With this extension, negotiators have more time to build on this success and hammer out a final deal that could guard against a nuclear-armed Iran and the risk of another devastating war in the Middle East.

Despite this progress, members of Congress are under intense pressure right now to support new sanctions and other saber-rattling measures. These could undermine the progress our diplomats have made toward an agreement. In your letter, ask your members of Congress to be on the right side of history and to support these negotiations, not get in their way.

Sincerely,

Jim Cason
Associate Executive Secretary
Strategic Advocacy

P.S. I hope you'll join us in Washington, DC on November 20 and 21 to lobby Congress for diplomacy. As negotiators approach the next deadline for a deal, Quakers and others from across the country will gather to show support in their states and districts for talking to Iran. Make your plans now to join us.
International Antiwar Coalitions During Vietnam War: Parallels During Long US/Iran Cold War?


The cover of Judy Tzu-Chun Wu's *Radicals on the Road* features a sepia-toned photograph of Eldridge Cleaver raising his fist in a Black Power salute behind three Vietnamese women in combat helmets, one of whom is kneeling behind an anti-aircraft gun. While you have probably seen a similar photograph of Jane Fonda from her North Vietnam trip in 1972, images like that of Cleaver are less common, if circulated at all. In this second book by Wu, she documents three sets of journeys “of traveling radicals who consciously crossed national borders and made coalitions across race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in order to build an international antiwar movement.” Wu’s subject in Section One, “Journeys for Peace,” is Robert Span Browne, a leader for black liberation in the US and for decolonization in the Third World from the 1930s to the 1970s. In Section Two, “Journeys for Liberation,” she recounts the tour of North Korea, North Vietnam, and China in 1970 by the U.S. People’s Anti-

**HISTORY, CONTEXTS OF US/IRAN CONFLICT**

A Defining Moment: The Historical Legacy of the 1953 Iran Coup by


**ABSTRACT**


The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States began in earnest as soon as the Second World War ended, shaping most of the remainder of the twentieth century. The U.S. doctrine of “containment” required confronting the Soviets at every point of contact, accompanied by the claim that lasting peace could be reached only through the establishment of an international order based on national states which enjoyed a U.S.-defined political liberty and a capitalist economic order. The Soviets bolstered their security through providing support to countries seen as friendly and close to their borders. Therefore, maintaining influence in Iran was a goal of Soviet foreign policy in the Middle East. U.S. foreign policy was shaped by its own state interests and ideology and driven by the American postwar, worldwide systems of military bases…. It is this turbulent period of geopolitical maneuvering that Ervand Abrahamian’s *The Coup* revisits. Yet, unlike other books on the 1953 events in Iran, Abrahamian locates the U.S.-backed coup less in the Cold War ideological confrontation between East and West than in the conflicts which opposed imperialism and nationalism; between the center of world capitalism and the underdeveloped economies heavily dependent on exporting raw natural resources.

**FULL TEXT:**

[PDF](http://dx.doi.org/10.14452/MR-066-05-2014-09_5)
"US Sent CIA Director as Ambassador to Tehran after CIA Overthrew Iran's Democratic Gov't (US Now Complaining about Hostage-Taker Amb.)"

By Juan Cole, Informed Comment blog, posted April 13

*The author teaches history at the University of Michigan.*

"The 30-Year US/Iran Nuke Standoff: We Started it in the Reagan Days"

By David Stockman, "Stockman's Corner" blog, posted March 26, 2014.  [from HAW]

*The author was director of the Office of Management and the Budget under President Reagan.*

HARPER'S BLOG

**HEART OF EMPIRE, SIX QUESTIONS** — May 6, 2014, 2:37 pm

*Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear*
In all the discussion of Iran's nuclear program, the consequent international economic blockade directed by the United States, and the ongoing negotiations to resolve the issue, Washington’s official history of the program has rarely been challenged. In *Manufactured Crisis, The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare* (Just World Books), award-winning investigative journalist Gareth Porter traces the true history of the program, as well as how and by whom the official narrative was constructed. I put six questions to Porter about his book.

1. Although the Iraqi nuclear “threat” was discredited as an utter fraud years ago, the idea that across the border Iran has sought, at least in the past, to build a nuclear weapon has long been widely accepted in political and media circles. Are you saying that the claim of secret work on nuclear weapons is equally fraudulent, and that the Iranians have never had a nuclear-weapons program?

Yes. In *Manufactured Crisis*, I show that the claim of an Iranian nuclear-weapons program has been based on false history and falsified records. The description of the Iranian nuclear program presented in official documents, in commentaries by think-tank “experts,” and in the media bears no resemblance to the essential historical facts. One would never know from the narrative available to the public over the years that Iran had
been prepared in the early 1980s to rely entirely on a French-based company for enriched uranium fuel for its Bushehr reactor, rather than on enriching uranium itself. Nor would one learn that the Reagan Administration sought to strangle Iran’s nuclear program, which was admitted to have presented no proliferation threat, in its cradle by pressuring Germany and France to refuse to cooperate in any way. The significance of that missing piece of history is that Iran was confronted with a choice of submitting to the U.S. effort to deprive Iran of its right to a peaceful nuclear program under the Non-Proliferation Treaty or else acquiring its own enrichment capability.

Not surprisingly, the Iranians chose the latter course, and went to the black market in defiance of what was by that point a unilateral U.S. policy. Their decision is now described in the popular narrative as evidence that Iran was seeking nuclear weapons early on.

The other relevant historical reality that has been systematically excised from the story of the Iranian nuclear program is what happened in regard to chemical weapons during the Iran–Iraq war. Contrary to disinformation issued by the U.S. Defense and State departments, which suggested that both sides had used chemical weapons in the Iraqi city of Halabja in 1988, the evidence is very clear that Iran never used chemical weapons during the war. The only explanation consistent with the historical record is that Ayatollah Khomeini forbade the use of such weapons, on the ground that both the possession and use of weapons of mass destruction are illicit under Islamic jurisprudence.

This policy, maintained despite the terrible losses Iran was suffering from Iraqi chemical attacks, represents powerful evidence that Shia jurisprudence is a fundamental constraint on Iranian policy toward weapons of mass destruction. It also makes credible the claim that Iran is forbidden by a fatwa from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei from possessing nuclear
weapons. But senior Iranian officials, including a former president of Iran, Hashami Rafsanjani, have been making cogent arguments against nuclear weapons based on strategic grounds since the early 1990s.

2. The U.S. produced various items of evidence over the years to demonstrate the felonious intent of the Iranian program. Where did this evidence come from, and how well does it stand up to scrutiny?

The evidence adduced to prove that Iran secretly worked on nuclear weapons represents an even more serious falsification of intelligence than we saw in the run-up to the war in Iraq. I tell the real story behind a large collection of intelligence documents that appeared mysteriously in 2004 and have been crucial to the Iran nuclear narrative. They supposedly came from the purloined laptop of an Iranian participant in a nuclear-weapons research project, but a former senior official with the German foreign office told me the real story: the documents were provided to Germany’s intelligence service by an occasional source who was part of the Iranian-exile terrorist organization Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK).

The obviously self-interested MEK member was thus the Iranian equivalent of the now-discredited Iraqi source known as “Curveball,” whose tales of mobile bioweapons labs in Saddam’s Iraq became the centerpiece of the Bush case for invading Iraq. It is well documented, however, that the Israeli Mossad was using the MEK to launder intelligence it didn’t want attributed to Israel, with the aim of influencing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and foreign governments. Further pointing to the Israeli origins of the documents is the fact that Israel was the only country in the world known to have a special office responsible for influencing news coverage of Iran’s nuclear program.

Some key points in the documents give away the fact that they
were falsified. The most important example is a set of studies, supposedly done in 2002 and 2003 on the Shahab-3 missile’s reentry vehicle, with the purported aim of allowing the missile to accommodate a nuclear weapon. Evidence from the U.S. intelligence community and authoritative independent sources shows that the Iranians had already abandoned the Shahab-3 by then, and were far along in developing an improved missile with a reentry vehicle that bore no resemblance to the one depicted in the studies. And we now know from Mohamed ElBaradei’s 2011 memoirs that in 2009 Israel provided a new series of intelligence reports and documents to the IAEA that offered further claims of Iranian work on nuclear weapons both before and after 2003.

Those claims were ultimately published in an IAEA dossier of intelligence reports in November 2011. The most sensational assertion made there was that Iran had constructed a large metal cylinder for testing nuclear-weapons designs at its military-research base at Parchin in 2000. This led officials from the IAEA and some of its member states, including the United States, to charge that Iran was altering the site to eliminate evidence. But as I document in the book, Iran had allowed the IAEA to carry out inspections at ten sites of the agency’s choosing on two different occasions in 2005. Furthermore the IAEA obtained satellite images of the site covering February 2005 to February 2012, and found no indication that Iran had been concerned about hiding anything. Finally, a former chief IAEA inspector in Iraq, Robert Kelley, has said that the agency’s description of the alleged cylinder made no technical sense.

3. How did the IAEA end up endorsing the notion that the Iranians have had a covert bomb program in the past and may still have one today?

The IAEA was crucial in legitimizing claims of a covert Iranian nuclear-weapons program, because it was seen as a neutral actor. That image was largely the result of the independence of
its former director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, from the Bush Administration. In 2005, when the IAEA received the documents that had come in through Germany’s intelligence service, ElBaradei was deeply skeptical of their authenticity and warned publicly against using them as evidence in a case against Iran.

But his control over the Iran issue was eroded starting in 2008, when the head of the IAEA’s Department of Safeguards, Olli Heinonen, began collaborating with U.S. officials on how to treat the documents. Diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks, when read against the background of 2008 IAEA reports, show that Heinonen and his Western allies came up with a strategy to falsely portray Iran as having conceded the authenticity of some of the documentation. Their aim was to justify IAEA demands for highly classified information on Iran’s missile and conventional-weapons programs. When Iran predictably refused, the IAEA and a U.S.-led coalition cited this as evidence of a cover-up.

The IAEA came to play an even more partisan role after Yukia Amano of Japan replaced ElBaradei in November 2009. A WikiLeaks cable from July 2009 reveals that Amano promised U.S. officials he would be firmly in their camp on Iran in return for American support of his election as director general. “In their camp” could only have meant that he would support the publication of the intelligence dossier — based entirely on intelligence reports and documents from Israel — that ElBaradei had refused to authorize. The dossier’s November 2011 publication date was timed to provide a political boost to the U.S.-led campaign for crippling international sanctions against Iran.

4. The U.S. intelligence community became a global laughingstock when its assessments of Iraqi WMDs were revealed as entirely bogus. Yet its pronouncements about the Iranian nuclear program are treated with deferential respect. How do you compare the performance of the U.S.
intelligence community on Iran with its record on Iraq?

The same political and institutional dynamics drove both failures. The March 2005 Robb–Silberman Commission Report cited analysts who worked on the Iraq WMD file as admitting freely that they had effectively reversed the burden of proof, refusing to believe that Iraq didn’t have WMD unless a highly credible human source said otherwise.

The same thing happened on Iran. It began in 1991, when then CIA director Robert M. Gates singled out Iran as the premier assessment target for the agency’s new center for proliferation issues. Not surprisingly, analysts immediately began interpreting even the most ambiguous evidence as indicating Iran’s intention to develop nuclear weapons. This predisposition just happened to be in line with American policy of forbidding its allies from providing nuclear technology to Iran. In other words, the intelligence followed the policy, not the other way around.

CIA brass apparently went so far as to suppress WMD intelligence obtained by one of its best covert agents in the Middle East because it didn’t fit the conclusion they knew George W. Bush’s administration wanted. I reveal for the first time in the book that a former undercover operative who brought a lawsuit against CIA leadership in 2004 claimed that a highly respected source in Iran had told him in 2001 that Iran had no intention of “weaponizing” its nuclear program. The CIA apparently never informed the White House of that information, and refused to circulate it within the intelligence community.

National Intelligence Estimates in 2001 and 2005, and a draft estimate in mid-2007, all concluded that Iran had a nuclear-weapons program. Paul Pillar, a former National Intelligence Officer for the Near East who participated in the 2001 and 2005 exercises, has recalled that no hard evidence of weaponization informed either estimate, and that their conclusion was based on inference. In the 2005 estimate and the 2007 draft estimate, the conclusion was influenced by the intelligence documents that
had come from Israel by way of the MEK. The failure of the CIA's well-staffed weapons-proliferation center to detect the fraud paralleled its failure to notice the obvious signs that the “Nigergate” document offered as evidence of Iraqi uranium-shopping in Niger was a rather amateurish fabrication.

The final 2007 NIE, which was issued in November, asserted that the 2005 NIE and the mid-2007 draft had both been dead wrong in their assertions that Iranian still had a nuclear-weapons program at the time of their writing. It concluded, rather, that based on intercepted “snippets of conversation,” Iran had had a nuclear-weapons program as of 2003, then stopped it. This finding, which gave additional credibility to the official narrative of Iran’s nuclear intentions, is itself highly questionable. It is very likely that the 2007 NIE authors interpreted evidence of one or more individuals’ work as confirmation of the existence of a full-fledged program — a belief in which they had clearly acquired a strong vested interest.

5. The news media generally disgraced itself in its coverage of the Iraqi nuclear issue. How has it comported itself with respect to Iran?

With Iraq, there was at least dissent over issues like its alleged illegal importation of aluminum tubes, which reflected debates within the intelligence community. Coverage of Iran, on the other hand, has been virtually unanimous in reporting the official line without the slightest indication of curiosity about whether it might be false or misleading. The closest we got to investigative work in the commercial media were hints, buried inside longer stories in the Washington Post, of skepticism in the intelligence community about the 2004 laptop documents.

Some of the most egregious misinformation came in late 2007 and early 2008, in stories in the New York Times and Washington Post about two IAEA reports containing the final results of a major agency investigation. Rather than reporting the fact that the agency had been unable to challenge
any of Iran’s explanations of the six issues under investigation, the *Times* and *Post* stories simply quoted Bush Administration officials and an unnamed IAEA official as dismissing the Iranian responses.

When the media challenged the official line, it was only because that line wasn’t hawkish enough. David Sanger of the *New York Times* carried out a relentless campaign in innumerable articles after the 2007 NIE attacking its conclusion that Iran had ceased work on nuclear weapons in 2003.

6. What impact do you believe the essentially unquestioned acceptance of this fraudulent nuclear narrative is likely to have on negotiations with Iran and beyond?

It creates serious obstacles. For one, it makes the Obama Administration much more vulnerable to the arguments of Israel and its followers in Washington that Iran cannot be allowed to have any enrichment capacity. But then, the administration itself has absorbed the essential elements of the narrative into its own analysis, notably via the creation of the “breakout” concept.

“Breakout” is defined as the time it would take Iran to enrich enough uranium to weapons-grade level to allow it to construct a single nuclear bomb. But it was a bogus idea from the beginning, because it assumed that Iran had the desire to rush-build a nuclear weapon. Furthermore it was based on highly unlikely worst-case scenarios for very rapid Iranian enrichment of uranium to a level sufficient for a bomb. According to the worst-case scenarios conjured up by conservative U.S. think tanks and others promoting the myth, Iran has had the same theoretical capacity for breakout — a month or two — since 2010. But rather than racing for a bomb, it has instead converted much of the uranium it enriched to a concentration of 20 percent uranium-235 (the enrichment level that has most worried the United States) to an oxide form that makes it unavailable for enrichment to weapons-grade level.
Nevertheless, the Obama Administration has been so intimidated by the breakout drumbeat that it has now adopted a policy of limiting Iran’s breakout period to between six and twelve months. That translates into a demand that Iran agree to be stripped of 80 percent of its centrifuges, which is all but certain to ensure the breakdown of the talks. Unless the administration changes its posture — which became less likely after it publicly cited that goal as a baseline — fear-mongering propagandists may well succeed in pushing the United States into a situation of increased tension with Iran, including the possible mutual escalation of military threats. That, of course, would be the result that Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long sought.

Manufactured Crisis: the Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare By Gareth Porter. Review by Edward S. Herman

Edward Herman
SUNDAY, 30 MARCH 2014 23:08

Journalist-scholar Gareth Porter has published another fine book on U.S. aggression, Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare, which follows in the footsteps of his 2005 study, The Perils of Dominance. The earlier book had as it main theme the idea that dominant U.S. military power in the 1950s and 1960s caused the U.S. leadership to believe that the threat of indefinite escalation would induce their Vietnamese enemy to surrender on U.S. terms, which the Vietnamese refused to do (his subtitle was “Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam”). A main theme of the new book is that U.S. power has permitted it to bully and manipulate the UN, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other elements of the “international community,” with the collaboration of Israel and its other Western allies, into selective harassment and even low-level warfare against Iran for its alleged quest for nuclear weapons. A semi-permanent crisis has been manufactured and institutionalized by the militarily dominant world bully, damaging the well-being of millions of Iranian civilians and posing the threat of open warfare.
Porter points out that the United States was highly supportive of the nuclear program of the Shah of Iran, who had plans for 23 nuclear power stations at the time of his 1979 ouster. Following that political change the United States quickly turned from encouraging Iran's nuclear program to active hostility, going to great pains to discourage any material or technology transfers to the new regime, even browbeating suppliers from fulfilling contracts that would have permitted Iran to complete its single nuclear reactor. There is no reason to disbelieve the Iranian claim that its aims initially were confined to completing its plant at Bushehr and continuing the operation of its Tehran Research Reactor for medical services. Porter makes the important point that the eventual Iranian effort to enrich uranium at home was a result of that Reagan era refusal to allow Iran to import that material. The refusal to allow Iranian imports of nuclear materials was also a denial of its rights under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In the early years of the U.S. boycott of nuclear materials and know-how there was no suggestion that this was out of fear of weaponization. It was just hostility to a government that had replaced a U.S. puppet and was independent, i.e., no longer a U.S. client.

This U.S. hostility was displayed early in the Carter administration’s failure to try to stop the Iraqi invasion of Iran, for which the United States had advance notice in 1980. There was the hope that this war would bleed Iran and perhaps even overthrow the regime. Porter quotes Walter Mondale: “We believed that this war would put further pressure on the Iranian regime.” Reagan era hostility went far in supplying Iraq with war materials, including cluster bombs, providing strategic advice, and working to persuade other countries not to supply arms to Iran. This country made no protest at Iraq’s massive use of chemical weapons against Iranian troops and civilians.

Porter notes that the Iranians did not retaliate with their own chemical weapons, and he points out later that there is no evidence that the Islamic Republic has ever built any chemical weapons capability. The Islamic leadership of Iran has repeatedly declared that both chemical and nuclear weapons are immoral and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a fatwah in 2003 declaring that the development and use of nuclear weapons was contrary to Islamic principles. This non-use of chemical weapons in the 1980s and declarations of the religious-morality-based prohibition of both chemical and nuclear weapons has been awkward for the Western warriors, so they and the media have solved this problem by occasional sneers and declarations of disbelief in the sincerity of these fatwahs, but mainly refusal to discuss.

In 1983 the Reagan administration obtained a cancellation of an IAEA program of aid to the Iranian nuclear program, which was the beginning of a systematic U.S. effort to prevent any international assistance to Iran’s nuclear activities. It was a part of a de facto war against Iran with geopolitical objectives and not directed to any perceived menace of a nuclear weapons program. This, and the durable program of denial that followed, was a denial of Iran’s legal rights under the NPT. But the United States could not only get away with pursuing this denial, it could build on it.

Iran persisted in trying to develop its nuclear capability partly for reasons of a desire to build
up its entire range of technical resources, partly perhaps to have a stand-by nuclear capability for a weapons construction in case of urgent need (a “hedging” strategy), and partly as a matter of national pride. Porter describes how universally the Iranian populace supports a nuclear program, and not for its weaponization capability, and thus how much pressure there is on its leadership to not abandon it altogether under external threat.

Because of U.S. power and hostility, whatever Iran did in the way of acquiring nuclear materials or technology could be portrayed as sinister; suppliers to Iran would be demonized and pressured. The IAEA was gradually transformed into a U.S. instrument of attack on Iran. Porter tells the story of how Mohamed ElBaradei, long-time head of the IAEA (1997-2009), fought a long battle to prevent the IAEA from becoming a pure instrument of U.S. policy, but under such pressure that the IAEA was made into such an instrument anyway, though becoming more blatantly so with his resignation and replacement by Yukiya Amano in July 2009.

Because of these hostile reactions to any of its nuclear transactions, along with Israel’s public threats, beginning in 1997, to bomb Iran’s nuclear facilities, Iran was secretive about some of its actions. This opened up greater possibilities of demonization and proofs of evil intentions underlying its program. Porter describes a stream of such accusations and proofs of dishonorable Iranian behavior. An early one was the 2002 disclosure to the media of an unpublicized Iranian facility being built at Natanz, possibly to produce enriched uranium. This public disclosure occurred before the deadline by which Iran had to notify the IAEA, but the propaganda system made the most of it. Significantly, the initial publicity was provided by the Mujahedeen-el-Khalq (MEK), a terrorist organization in the Clinton years, but taken off and transformed into freedom fighters by the Obama administration. The disclosure by MEK was based on information supplied by Israel based on satellite photos. The media gobbled it up.

The U.S. Iran policy of regime change, made explicit during the Bush-Cheney years, made for unrelenting hostility toward and demonization of the Iranian government. The Bush administration expected to attack Iran once they had done with Iraq, but the setback in Iraq not only stalled this invasion plan, it made it harder for them to get the Iran threat brought before the Security Council. But throughout the Bush years and in the decades that followed, the United States and Israel kept up a tattoo of charges against Iran that required more inspections and created the moral atmosphere of a patient West dealing with a genuine menace.

Of course the charges against Iran now featured their alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons, which made their evasions more menacing. There was in consequence a long and intensive effort to produce evidence, or claim that weaponization charges were credible even if not verified, so as to allow harsher penalties and possible military action against Iran. Porter deals in detail with a number of these episodes and finds all of them fraudulent. Notable was the “laptop documents” of 2004, that showed Iranian weaponization work, which mysteriously fell
into U.S. hands, supposedly provided by an Iranian engineer and spy, who never made a personal appearance. These documents once again were supplied by MEK, which got them once again from Israel. There were also internal inconsistencies and other problems with these documents that caused the German secret service agency BND to regard them as in the same class with the spurious information given them by “Curveball” prior to the Iraq invasion. It is notable that Colin Powell used the Curveball claims in his false testimony on the Iraq threat at the UN in February 2003, and in 2004 once again cited Curveball 2 in supporting the Bush administration charges against Iran.

There were many other claims of an Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons, and there was a steady struggle both within the IAEA and U.S. and Israeli intelligence agencies on this issue. But no hard evidence was ever produced and quite a few intelligence experts claimed that there was no evidence of an Iranian pursuit of weapons, although they might be aiming at a weapons capability. Porter emphasizes the important institutional bias of the experts in this field toward finding the results their political superiors wanted, and those superiors wanted to find Iranian nuclear weapons or weapons programs. The struggles just noted were a result of the fact that Iran wasn’t pursuing nuclear weapons, so that created a serious difficulty for those experts with integrity. But the latter regularly lost out and intelligence reports regularly ended with claims that Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons. (See chap. 9, “Intelligence Failure”)

Porter stresses throughout the important role the mainstream media have played in manufacturing the Iran crisis. Like the experts the media also have institutional pressures that cause them to get on official bandwagons and to avoid challenging claims against demonized enemies. Porter has scores of illustrations of cases of media gullibility and of journalists often going beyond official claims to make the demon even more nefarious. The most prominent media propagandists shown up in his book are David Sanger, Ethan Bronner and William Broad of the *New York Times*, Carla Anne Robbins of the *Wall Street Journal*, Joby Warrick, David Ignatius and Robin Wright of the *Washington Post*, and Melissa Block and Mike Schuster of NPR.

The other major actors in this manufactured crisis are the leaders of Israel, most notably Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak. They have played the Iran nuclear threat card for years, although many Israeli analysts consider the threat inflated and/or manageable. But it is very useful for distracting attention away from the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestine by portraying Israel as under siege and threat of another Holocaust. It has worked well, and has helped maintain the Iran threat at a high pitch. Clinton threw his weight into this campaign to win Israeli and hence U.S. legislative support, and it has put great pressure on Obama.

Porter spells out the confusion and contradictions in Obama’s policy toward Iran. While initially talking about direct negotiations and a new relationship with Iran in public, he secretly gave a go ahead to a joint U.S.-Israeli cyber-warfare program to disable Iran’s Natanz facility, which was actually carried out, and he adopted a hard line policy on negotiations and sanctions. Porter contends that Obama did this in collusion with Netanyahu in exchange for
the latter’s promise to freeze settlements on the West Bank, which Netanyahu never fulfilled. Porter also contends that Obama and Netanyahu colluded on a phony war crisis whereby Netanyahu would threaten an attack on Iran, and the U.S. would not oppose it publicly but with the understanding that Netanyahu would not attack—the point being to worry Iran and also worry Russia and China into agreeing to more severe sanctions on Iran.

The Obama-Netanyahu alliance eventually fell apart, because Netanyahu failed to carry out his part of the agreement and also over-reached in putting pressure on Obama. Netanyahu counted on a Republican electoral victory in 2012, and called on AIPAC and his political allies in congress to force Obama to accept a “red line” beyond which the military option would enter the picture. Following the election Obama backed off from the phony war crisis plan, and he made it clear that he was not committed to the red line and war option and couldn’t be counted on to follow Netanyahu into war.

Porter gives great weight to the June 2013 election of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran, which he believes opened up new peace possibilities. Obama welcomed this election and negotiations soon followed, in the course of which Iran made a series of concessions to assure the West that it would not be approaching a nuclear weapons capability (Porter summarizes these in an Epilogue). Porter is qualifiedly optimistic that an agreement might be reached, but he points out the great power of the pro-war forces and the political costs an agreement might impose on Obama, amplified by the fact that he and his staff had engaged in a demonization of Iran that made it hard for him to support an agreement except on strictly pragmatic grounds. But he ends on a hopeful note.

Porter’s book is notable for its focus on empirical evidence and factual detail in making his cases and effectively refuting the claims of the manufacturers of the crisis. In some respects this makes his book more powerful and likely to be taken seriously by members of the establishment. On the other hand, it sacrifices some of the drama and larger meanings of his findings. For example, he points out that the Israelis have carried out a number of assassinations of Iranian scientists, and that the Israelis and United States have had positive relations with MEK, a terrorist organization that has participated in the manufacture of a crisis. But he does not use the words terrorist or sponsor of terrorism to describe Israel and the United States. Similarly, he notes that the Israeli-US insertion of a computer virus into the Natanz plant was “the first national cyber attack to be aimed at the actual destruction of civilian infrastructure in another country.” But he does not call this an act of terrorism or aggression. He has many pages describing the frequent Israeli threats to bomb Iran’s nuclear facilities, and U.S. connivance in this program, but he does not point out that such a threat is itself an act of aggression in violation of the UN Charter. So is the sanctions program, designed to make Iranian civilians suffer in order to coerce the Iranian government into bargaining concessions or to facilitate regime change. It is also notable that the head of the UN has not objected at all to these acts that violate the UN Charter, although that is the instrument that supposedly guides his work. He works in fact for the prime violators of the Charter.
So this is not merely a manufactured crisis, it is a joint criminal enterprise that is not yet at an end. But like Porter we may hope that it is or soon will be.

[Dick: I read this in *Z Magazine* (April 2014)]

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### Write or Call the White House
President Obama has declared his commitment to creating the most open and accessible administration in American history. That begins with taking comments and questions from you, the public, through our website.

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- Visitor's Office: 202-456-2121

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3. Please include your return address on your letter as well as your envelope. If you have an email address, please consider including that as well.

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