



laetus in praesens

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10 Unanswered Questions on Iran and Israel

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Produced in the light of the Press Conference of President Barack Obama (6 March 2012) and a crisis meeting of the IAEA (Vienna, 7 March 2012) seeking consensus on action against Iran

Questions

1. Why is the case against [Iran's capacity to produce nuclear weapons of mass destruction](#) always presented **without** systematic comparison with the track record relating to [Israel's capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction](#), notably with respect to:
 - the pattern of prevarication, obfuscation and denial:
 - *Israel*: according to the Arms Control Association (*Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance*), Israel is thought to possess an arsenal of potentially up to several hundred nuclear warheads based on estimates of the amount of fissile material produced by Israel This has never been openly confirmed or denied however, due to Israel's [policy of deliberate ambiguity](#)
 - *Iran*: as evident from past and ongoing protests by the international community, regarding what is arguably to be understood as a [policy of deliberate ambiguity](#). This raises the issue of how to distinguish "unambiguously" between two policies of deliberate ambiguity.
 - the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#):
 - *Israel*: non-signatory, with rejection of accession proposals (*IAEA rejects Arab nuclear resolution on Israel, BBC News*, September 2010)
 - *Iran*: signatory, thereby justifying calls to respect the provisions of the Treaty, which Israel is free to ignore
 - the results of inspections of sites by IAEA:
 - *Israel*: (see: [Statement](#) to IAEA by Israel Atomic Energy Commission, September 2011: IAEA report on *Israeli Nuclear Capabilities*, September 2010; Associated Press report *IAEA to discuss Israel's nuclear activities for first time*, May 2010)
 - *Iran*: (see IAEA [Board Report](#); [Chronology of key events](#))
 - the responses to UN Resolutions by Israel and by Iran?
 - the differences in action envisaged by the international community against countries, such as Iran and Israel, suspected of developing nuclear weapons (cf. *Iran nuclear: Six powers seek consensus in Vienna talks, BBC News*, 8 March 2012)
2. Given the widely noted parallels with the presentations of the strongest "evidence" concerning the [weapons of mass destruction of Iraq](#) -- including formal affirmations to the UN Security Council -- is it probable that there is no actual programme to develop such weapons in Iran? By what indications is it clear that nuclear research is **non-peaceful**, especially when inference of dual use can be made? (cf. Tom Burghardt, *Secret State Agencies: 'No Hard Evidence' Iran Building Nukes, March to War Continues, Global Research*, 5 March 2012)
3. Given that President Barack Obama ([Press Conference](#), 6th March 2012) has asserted that "[Iran has to come to the table and prove its nuclear program is peaceful](#)", and that Iran "[knows how](#)" to prove this to the satisfaction of the international community, does the US itself "know how" to prove to the world that it is not developing even more dangerously powerful weapons of mass destruction -- perhaps not even envisaged by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty?

How is a [negative satisfactorily proven](#) or [evidence of absence to be provided](#)? How does someone prove that they are **not** a terrorist -- or a secret agent? Are all potential sites in the US regularly inspected by the IAEA? With what conclusion? If the IAEA asserts that "[it cannot be sure that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful](#)" (5th March 2012), how could it be sure that the nuclear program of any nation is peaceful? Do standards of inspection differ for any reason? If there are "unanswered questions", as variously claimed in the case of Iran, is it possible that answers cannot be given to the satisfaction of the questioner -- as in other cases?

4. Given the present experience with the pattern of sanctions against Iraq -- and with their past consequences for human life -- will equivalent effects on child mortality of sanctions in Iran be considered "worth it", as previously asserted by a US Ambassador to the UN with respect to the 500,000 child fatalities in the case of sanctions against Iraq? In framing such justification within a context of absence of **moral equivalence**, as argued by another US Ambassador to the UN (*The Myth of Moral Equivalence*, 1986), is there nevertheless a case for recognizing the existence of a "policy of deliberate moral ambiguity"? Does an alleged offender "know how" to prove moral probity with respect to accusations made?
5. Are the major players in the drama so internally insecure, so characterized by deviousness, and so prone to crises of every kind, that they need to fabricate external enemies in order to engender a semblance of internal coherence, righteousness, and honorability?
6. Given the profound significance variously attached to the **Abrahamic religions** by the major players in the potential disaster, how are the theological issues of death and annihilation considered and justified -- whether by each or in consultation with the others? Will the outcome be considered as the "Will of God", or even an "Act of God"?
7. Given the widely acknowledged preoccupation, in the case of Iraq, with ensuring (Western) access to its oil resources, is it to be expected that declarations avoiding this dimension, or denying it, should be taken at face value in the case of Iran -- rather than as an indication of hidden agendas?
8. To what extent is the potential conflict, to which the major players variously seem to aspire, to be understood as a further opportunity for testing and justifying their existing weapons capability -- if only in support of their respective arms industries?
9. Given that rational discourse in this domain has been demonstrated to be variously flawed and untrustworthy, how is it that formal declarations at the highest level can continue to be made with the naive presumption that they will be recognized to be reasonable and in good faith?
10. Given the strategic tensions and intentions, why is the ultimate remedy primarily defined in ballistic terms -- with no recourse to mathematics of higher dimensionality in which all involved have remarkable expertise? Is this a fundamental commitment to Stone Age strategies? (cf. *And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians*, 2000).

Are there other such questions which merit consideration?

From whom might trustworthy answers to these questions be expected?

Given the increasingly sophisticated understanding of **nothing** by physics, could this fruitfully inform the nature of the annihilation the players hope to perpetrate on each other -- especially if those insights can be transposed from the physics of developing that destructive capacity to the metaphysics enabling the negation of the other? There would seem to be an urgent need for a context in which physicists and theologians could explore the credibility of engendering nothingness (cf. *International Institute of Advanced Studies in Mathematical Theology: enabling proposal for faith-based governance*, 2011). This suggests the possibility of articulating a creative approach, more appropriate to the 21st Century, of "Mutually Assured Negation" (MAN) -- a reframing of the MAD variant of the Cold War.

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