

A Timetable For War

Posted By [Philip Giraldi](#) On May 5, 2010 @ 11:00 pm In [Uncategorized](#) | [80 Comments](#)

Readers of my articles will know that I am extremely pessimistic about the prospects for peace in the Middle East. I do not believe for a second that the leaders of Israel actually consider Iran to be an "existential" threat but the fact that they have cried wolf so often has convinced the Israeli public that it is so. Worse still, Israel's friends in the US have convinced the American public of the same thing even though Iran does not threaten the United States at all. Relying on a complaisant media that has fully embraced the fabricated narrative of fanatical Mullahs brandishing nuclear weapons shortly before handing them over to al-Qaeda, a majority of Americans now believes that Iran must be dealt with by force and that it already has a nuclear weapon. As in the case in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, the fictitious threat has taken on an ominous reality because the lie has been repeated often enough to appear to be truth.

I believe several things must be understood in relationship to the likely formula for initiation of such a conflict. First, in spite of the increasingly bellicose language coming from Robert Gates and Hillary Clinton, I do not believe that the Obama Administration wants a war. On the contrary, I believe that the language is designed to convince Tel Aviv that the US is getting tough with Iran to preempt any possible military action. The principal advocates of war in the United States are not in the White House. They continue to belong to the Israeli lobby as given voice through its acolytes in Congress and the media.

Second, the Israeli government having sold the "existential threat" fiction does want a war, but its options are limited. It knows it can only do temporary damage to Iran and wants the United States to do the heavy lifting. That will require contriving a situation that will bring about US entry into the conflict, otherwise an Israeli attack will have only limited value, possibly slowing down Iran's nuclear program but not stopping it while also guaranteeing that the Mullahs will make the political decision to develop a weapon.

Third, Washington has no real ability to put pressure on Israel as the White House has already made clear that it will not cut aid to Tel Aviv and will continue to use its veto to protect Israel in international fora like the United Nations.

Fourth, once the shooting begins, even if Israel starts it, both Congress and the media will demand that Washington intervene to support brave little democracy Israel. One can be sure that on the day after Tel Aviv starts a conflict Congress will overwhelmingly pass a motion approving the Israeli action and also calling on the White House to have American forces join in. *The Washington Post*, FOX news, and *The New York Times* will be beside themselves with joy.

Putting the four premises together, what does it all mean? It means that Israel will seek to start a conflict with Iran and pull the United States in. It will ignore any US calls for restraint and will attack the Mullahs with or without a pretext, whether or not Iran remains in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime (which I believe it will), and whether or not Tehran does anything aggressive. In the lead-up to such an attack, Israel will intensify its propaganda efforts and is quite prepared to lie to make a case against Iran and its friends in the Middle East region. The recent total fabrication of a case that Syria had given Scud missiles to Hezbollah is a case in point. Israel sees everyone in the region as an enemy or a potential enemy and it works very hard to make Washington see things the same way. Once the fighting starts, Washington will inevitably be drawn in with Congress and the mainstream media cheerleading the process.

So let us assume that Israel will attack Iran. After all, it is a win-win situation for them in that they will demonstrate once again to the Muslim world that they are not to be trifled with and will leave the serious fighting to the United States. I believe they will attack Iran by the shortest route, which is over Iraqi airspace. Iraqi airspace is controlled by the United States Air Force, which would undoubtedly be under orders not to shoot down the Israeli planes lest Obama find himself facing a furious AIPAC, Congress, and the press immediately thereafter. A shoot down order is just not possible given Congressional democrats' fear of how Jewish political donors would react, not to mention the danger that the usual voices in the media would turn against the Obama administration on the eve of the midterm elections. Unless the Iranians were to react in an extremely restrained fashion, they would consider the US complicit in the attack due to the passage over Iraq and their retaliation would bring Washington into the war, which is precisely what Israel expects to happen.

The only joker in the deck for Israel is the possible unintended consequences. If the war were to go badly, with Iran, for example, using its Chinese supplied cruise missiles to sink a US aircraft carrier, the role of Israel in starting the conflict might well be challenged by many in the US, so many that even the media and Congress would have to take notice. But Israel probably considers that a remote possibility given the huge military advantage that the United States enjoys over Iran so they likely believe it to be it a risk worth taking. Also, one must consider that the hard right Israeli government of Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu is not necessarily a rational player that will weigh up all the pluses and minuses. Netanyahu is driven by racism, intellectual arrogance, and a belief that he can control events in the United States, all of which will be part of his decision making.

Which leads to the question of timing. There has been some talk in the media that Israel would likely "do

something" by November. Why that date is being selected is not completely clear, but I believe it will be sooner and this is why: as noted above, the United States controls Iraqi airspace currently. But that control will be ceded to the Iraqi government in August when the US presence in Iraq is due to be reduced to a "garrison non-combatant" level of 60,000 soldiers and airmen. At that point, the US Air Force will no longer have autonomous authority to engage in Iraqi airspace, but the Iraqi government will be empowered to request US assistance to do so. Imagine for a moment what it would do to US credibility in the Arab world if Baghdad were to ask the US to help defend its airspace against an Israeli incursion and the US were to refuse to do so. So I think the Israelis will make their move before August. They want to entangle the United States into fighting on their behalf but they will not necessarily want to humiliate Obama while doing so.

So what can Obama do to stop this? There has been some speculation that he might send a private emissary to Israeli Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu with the message that the United States does not support an Israeli attack and that Washington will both denounce the action and not back Tel Aviv. I believe that Obama has already told Netanyahu both privately and through diplomatic channels that the US opposes military action but the Israeli government no doubt regards such a warning as toothless, particularly as both Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton have asserted that Israel has a right to make its own security decisions. Any move to punish or pressure the Israelis would be blocked by Congress, so the Obama warning can be brushed off. The only option that I believe would actually work is for Obama to go public preemptively on the issue and proclaim that there is no casus belli with Iran, that any Israeli attack will not be supported by the United States and that furthermore the United States will take the lead in condemning such an act in the United Nations and in all other appropriate international fora. Is that likely to happen? I think not. And that is precisely the reason why I think a new war in the Middle East is inevitable and will take place this year, probably by August.

Read more by Philip Girdi

- [Papering the War Against Iran](#) – April 28th, 2010
- [Israel First: More on Dr. Lani Kass](#) – April 21st, 2010
- [Dr. Strangelove, Made in Israel](#) – April 14th, 2010
- [Nuking the Mullahs](#) – April 7th, 2010
- [Honest in the Worst Way](#) – March 31st, 2010

Article printed from Antiwar.com Original: <http://original.antiwar.com>

URL to article: <http://original.antiwar.com/girdi/2010/05/05/a-timetable-for-war/>