



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 6, 2012

Mideast Expert, Ron Paul Agree: U.S. Actions Make War with Iran Likely

This may sound like a Ron Paul stump speech. But in fact, it is the essence of a recent [Bloomberg article](#) by Vali Nasr, a Middle East expert with contacts in the government of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khameni. Nasr's piece, says [Robert Wright](#) of the *Atlantic*, vindicates the Texas Republican's "sheer conjecture" about Iran's interpretation of Western actions as ["acts of war."](#)



Paul's "conjecture," of course, was based on a simple understanding of human nature. If Oceania routinely threatens Eastasia and begins punishing it, the Eastasian people and their government are not going to sit idly by and allow their country to be destroyed. They will fight back. Then Oceania will escalate the conflict further, Eastasia will respond in kind, and so on, until a full-scale war is under way.

Such a war between the United States and Iran, Nasr maintains, "could be tripped off without either country intending it" because both countries are pursuing policies that make war almost inevitable, though Iran's policies are largely in response to those of the United States.

Tehran has been remarkably patient in the face of U.S. aggression, Nasr argues. It has "absorbed economic pressure from abroad" and "remained silent in the face of covert operations aimed at slowing the progress of its nuclear program, brushing off the destructive Stuxnet computer worm, apparently a joint U.S.-Israeli project."

Now, however, it fears the worst. Between "multiple assassinations of its scientists and ... suspicious explosions at its military facilities" (including one that killed the general in charge of its missile program) and increasingly tough sanctions, Nasr avers, the ruling clerics "now see the U.S. policy on Iran ... as one aimed at regime change."

Tehran's solution: Get nukes — the only surefire way to prevent a U.S. invasion. Writes Nasr:

Without such weapons, Iran could face the Libya scenario: economic pressure causing political unrest that invites intervention by foreign powers that feel safe enough to interfere in the affairs of a non-nuclear-armed state. The more sanctions threaten Iran's internal stability, the more likely the ruling regime will be to pursue nuclear deterrence and to confront the West to win the time Iran needs to reach that goal.

As Ron Paul put it in his down-to-earth way, "If I were an Iranian, I'd like to have a nuclear weapon, too,



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because you gain respect from them.”

This is how Paul, with his homespun, commonsense approach to foreign policy, can arrive at the same conclusion as a genuine expert on Iran. “Paul,” Wright remarked in an earlier [column](#), “routinely performs a simple thought experiment: He tries to imagine how the world looks to people *other than Americans*.” “This,” he added, “is such a radical departure from the prevailing American mindset that some of Paul’s critics see it as ... evidence of his weirdness.”

Yet it is precisely what Nasr prescribes as a solution to the escalating tensions in the Persian Gulf. As long as U.S. policymakers refuse to see things as the Iranians see them, they will continue to tighten the noose on Tehran, virtually guaranteeing a war. If, on the other hand, they were to consider how Americans would respond if Iranians were assassinating their scientists, imposing crushing sanctions on them, and otherwise threatening them, they just might recognize that, in Nasr’s words, “U.S. policy is encouraging [an aggressive Iranian position], making a dangerous military confrontation more likely.”

Unfortunately, Wright observed, empathy for others is “not exactly a favorite pastime among American politicians these days.” Fortunately, however, one politician with a large and growing following is making empathy popular again. Considering how much Ron Paul has changed the terms of the debate on so many other matters (e.g., the Federal Reserve, the gold standard, federal spending), Americans and Iranians can only hope that he is successful in getting Washington to put itself in Tehran’s sandals before the dogs of war are once more unleashed in the Middle East.



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