

Attack Iran? But how?



Recently, I got a reminder of the need to identify the actual problem, not just its symptoms, if the problem is to be solved; it came from YouTube. YouTube learned that I am a Russian, and keeps placing Russian songs and films on my playlist. And the suggestions are pretty good. Just the other day I watched an hour-long documentary about Mstislav Keldysh – I heard the name before, but never knew who he was. It turned out that he was an applied mathematician of genius who provided the mathematical apparatus that made possible such pioneering Soviet achievements as the hydrogen bomb and spaceflight; he later served as the president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The documentary focused on the cause of his death – there is a suspicion that, having suffered deep

depression caused by insomnia and excruciating physical pain, he committed suicide – but this was not what interested me; the way he approached problems was fascinating. Among his many brilliant achievements was mathematical explanation of two deadly phenomena that plagued early aviation – “flutter,” in which the body of an airborne plane suffered sudden and catastrophic vibrations, and “shimmy” – an uncontrollable wobbling of a plane’s wheel during takeoff or landing, that tore that wheel off, destroying the airplane. Both problems were reasonably attributable to resonance, but could not be solved. Keldysh saw a different reason behind those phenomena, and provided an adequate mathematical model, saving many lives. Rather than providing the solution to the wrong problem that was in plain view, he identified and attacked the right problem that no one saw.

Clearly, having the right problem to solve is the main prerequisite for solving it. Right diagnosis is vital for a simple reason that diagnosis determines treatment. A wrong treatment is of no use, and the wrongly-diagnosed problem will be treated wrongly, too – with unfortunate, if not deadly, results.

That’s what I thought as I read [New York Times’ analysis](#) of Israel’s ability (or rather, inability) to strike Iranian’s nuclear program. According to that report, Iranian nuclear sites are scattered throughout this huge country, they are located at a prohibitively great distance, they are buried deep underground (or even under a mountain), they are protected by effective anti-aircraft systems. On the other hand, Israel has neither the refueling aircraft that would help the bombers reach their targets, nor the bomber aircraft capable of carrying heavy bunker-busters that are needed for the task. Hence, according to the *New York Times*, for all its rhetoric Israel has no viable option for eliminating Iran’s nuclear threat. The other [simultaneously-published news article](#) dovetailed with this assessment, giving voice to the

concerns of retired American diplomats, politicians and military figures who appealed to Biden to show some spine, and prepare a far more capable, American air force for a strike – not so much to bomb Iran’s sites, as to project the ability to do so, thus instilling into the ayatollahs the fear that America won’t let Iran get the bomb, and prodding ayatollahs not to risk losing everything by stalling at the Vienna talks, but to come to their senses and agree to return to Obama’s “Iran deal.”

In other words, the solution that everyone has in mind is either military or diplomatic, the diplomacy being coercive, backed by a credible threat of military action – the American military action that is, since the Israeli one is unreliable (though to judge by yet another recent headline quoting someone who should know, [“Israel’s incoming Air Force chief: We can attack Iran tomorrow if needed”](#) the jury on Israel’s military capacity is out.).

Planning for any eventuality is a reasonable and commonsense approach; the fact that the US national security advisor Jake Sullivan just visited Israel is a stark reminder that all options are being carefully examined and considered. And yet, when one analyses the cause of the threat posed by Iran, one finds that, ultimately, it is not its armed buildup; it is secondary. What stands behind it is something totally different – it is ayatollahs’ Islamist ideology. That is the true cause of Iranian’s belligerency; its development of nuclear weaponry, and delivery vehicles, prompted and promoted by that ideology.

Ayatollahs’ ideology – the key, foundational element of the Iranian regime – is not hidden, it is not buried under layers upon layers of reinforced concrete, nor is it dug into a mountain. On the contrary, it is proudly exposed, for all to see it and to submit to it. Attacking it requires neither the aircraft, nor missiles, but mere words – and if it is hit effectively, the regime will fall, taking down the entire

superstructure of evil with it.

Well, no one notices this target – or perhaps, no one wishes to notice it. Realpolitik pays no attention to ideological niceties, only accounting for the GDP, and the size of the armed forces. Besides, our inherent Political Correctness demands that we look the other way, and not speak idly (nor, heaven forbid, with hostility or disdain) of such things as religion that are part of one's innermost, and ultimately sacred values of "culture" and "identity."

But suppose we do examine it. After all, in the age of Enlightenment – the age of robust thinking, the age of not being afraid to ruffle feathers and hurt feelings – that would not have been a big deal. That, of course, was two and a half centuries ago – the West went backward into the age of Darkening since. Though the science greatly progressed, and the technology vastly improved, we are far, far back in time insofar as the daring to think goes; we are in Dark Ages, in fact, fearing the Inquisition of Political Correctness and the thought police of Wokeness that is all around us. Still, let's take a deep breath and forget Political Correctness for a moment, and take a look at Islamism. We'll notice something very interesting: there is absolutely no way for anyone, ayatollahs included, to know whether God talked to Mohammed, and whether Koran is a transcript of their conversation. No one – neither those who call themselves ayatollahs, or mullahs, or the like, nor the rank-and-file Moslems who talk of the Koran as the word of God, or of Mohammed as His messenger, can possibly know what they are talking about.

The logical conclusion of this inability to know is fascinating: in purely religious terms, ayatollahs, their ilk, and their followers are idol-worshipers: in relying on their non-existing ability to know God's will, they use their brain to make the very god they worship. Idolatry is something that, in ayatollahs' own framework of thought, is ultimately illegitimate, and horrifyingly godless – so ayatollahs are

their own worst nightmare; their regime is idolatrous and religiously illegitimate, as are their Shia satellites like Lebanese Hezbollah or Yemeni Houthies, as well as their Sunni counterparts like ISIS, Taliban, al Qaeda, or Hamas. Muster your courage and expose their idolatry, and Islamism will be deflated and defeated, shriveling and collapsing, to be swept away to the “trash heap of history,” as Margaret Thatcher described the ultimate destination of Communism .

At times, the military action is the only thing that can save the day. But often, the pen is (as the saying goes) mightier than the sword. When it comes to ideology, reason is a powerful – and in fact, the only – weapon. Too bad that we in the West forgot how to use it – or are too politically correct to deploy it. That is extremely unfortunate – as Mstislav Keldysh’s story teaches us, a solution should fit the problem, and the problem of Islamism that presently plagues the world is ideological by nature, and the solution to it is reason; it is counter-argument rather than bombs.

Islamism is rooted in a single error – the notion that one can know whether God talked to Mohammed. Expose the folly of this notion – and all violently supremacist manifestations of Islamism, including Iranian regime of the ayatollahs, will collapse, leaving in place mere Islamic culture, tradition, and history – which, when they lose their claim to being the ultimate, superior Truth that needs to be imposed on humanity for its own good and for the triumph of God, will no longer cause trouble, being just one other religion, just one other historical manifestation of deep human hunger for deeper meaning, just one other witness to human search for the divine.

No bombs, no missiles, no bloodshed is really needed to reduce the militant, idolatrous “Truth” of Islamism to a mere cultural tradition of Islam, turning a triumphalist and aggressively militant movement into a benign, tradition-based religiosity, and an oppressive and belligerent Iran of the

ayatollahs that sows misery and terror throughout the Middle East into a country at peace with her citizens and neighbors.

What's needed to effect this change is a bit of courage on the part of the West – the courage to expose the place in Islamists' reasoning and logic where they got overeager, fell over and got sucked in by the morass of idol-worship.

Enlightenment – and the will to use it – is what is needed to deal with Iran; it is needed far more than refueling aircraft and bunker-busting bombs.

Lev Tsitrin is the author of [*The Pitfall of Truth: Holy War, its Rationale and Folly,*](#)