

# THE NATIONAL INTEREST

## Ignore the Hawks on Iran, Too

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This week, experts at the (neo)conservative American Enterprise Institute (AEI) released a report on [how to deal with a nuclear-armed Iran](#) [3].

The authors argue that because of the “rising consensus” that a preemptive attack is unappealing and that sanctions likely will fail, they recommend “a coherent Iran containment policy.” That approach entails, among other things, that America “work toward a political transformation, if not a physical transformation, of the Tehran regime.” Leaving aside the fact that Washington has already once “physically transformed the Tehran regime”—when alongside the British it overthrew Iran’s democratically elected prime minister in 1953 and restored the Shah—there is a broader problem that comes with listening to proponents of the calamitous decision to invade Iraq.

Take, for instance, report coauthor Danielle Pletka, who years ago decreed “[Saddam’s entire Ba’athist government must be replaced](#) [4].” Little surprise that someone who promoted a war based on a web of misleading information is now peddling the notion that [Iran is less than a year from obtaining a nuclear weapon](#) [5].

More credible voices suggest otherwise. The nonprofit Arms Control Association (ACA) observed that the most recent IAEA report suggests “[I]t remains apparent that a nuclear-armed Iran is still not imminent nor is it inevitable.” Iran was engaged in nuclear-weapons development activities [until it stopped in 2003](#) [6], and, as Cato’s Justin Logan [observes](#) [7], the IAEA’s own report shows there is no definitive evidence of Iran’s diversion of fissile material.

When Pletka was [called out](#) [8] for her “less than a year” prediction, she turned up her nose and snapped:

Quibblers will suggest that there are important “ifs” in both these assessments. And yes, the key “if” is “if” Iran decides to build a bomb. So, I suppose when I

said “less than a year away from having a nuclear weapon,” I should have added, “if they want one.” But . . . isn't that the point? Do we want to leave this decision up to Khamenei?

Confronted with ambiguous information, and forced to infer intentions, hawks evince the very same arrogance and overconfidence that [helped open the door](#) <sup>[9]</sup> for Iranian influence in the region in the first place by toppling Saddam Hussein's regime (Pletka advocated repeatedly for this [leading up to](#) <sup>[10]</sup> the 2003 invasion). Pletka and others who years ago had the gall to [argue](#) <sup>[10]</sup> that Iraq "will end when it ends" are today worthy of being ignored on Iran.