

# Menace of the New Year: Iran's President Ahmadinejad

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While *Time* magazine chose Bill and Melinda Gates and Bono as its 2005 “persons of the year,” the cover of the *Devil's Advocate* would certainly have been adorned with Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

How to respond to Ahmadinejad's in-your-face challenges? To retreat into silent paralysis would be read in the Mideast much the way the world's silent acquiescence to Saddam's gassing of the Kurds – as a tacit green light to up the ante.

World leaders have two choices: de-couple Iran's nuclear threat from Tehran's anti-Jewish genocidal declarations in order to first defuse a clear-and-present danger, or insist on linking the nuclear and ideological threats because there can be no meaningful nuclear deal with a regime flaunting every international norm by threatening genocide.

On the surface, the “de-coupling” strategy favoured by foreign policy “realists” seems compelling. A nuclearized Iran would pose an

immediate threat to her neighbours and most European capitals. Deal with the genocidal bombast, only after an understanding on Tehran's atomic designs has been reached.

But treating genocidal threats as mere tactical bravado rather than a strategic goal proved disastrous at a pivotal moment of the 20th century.

In 1938, Western democracies recognized that they faced an aggressive Germany with designs on its neighbours led by a totalitarian dictator whose statecraft included inciting Jew hatred on an international scale.

Appeasement – the surrender of democratic Czechoslovakia – just whetted Hitler's aggressive ideological-and-territorial appetites. The result was a world war within a year, and the Nazi “war against the Jews” that forever shamed European civilization.

Tehran's mullahs are weaponizing hatred and marketing it globally, the same way they plan to weaponize uranium for missile warheads to menace Israel and Europe.

Their hatred of Jews and Judaism is no fleeting tactic, but a pillar of their worldview and game plan. Once,

Nazi war criminals fled to Argentina. Now, Europe's Neo-Nazi Holocaust Deniers find safe haven and acclaim in Tehran. The line between anti-Semitic hate speech and terrorism was long ago erased when Iranian agents in 1994 murdered and maimed hundreds when they bombed the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires.

And it should surprise no one that President Ahmadinejad chose Mecca – Islam's holiest site – to throw down the gauntlet to the civilized world by threatening genocide against Israel.

While this campaign may be geared in part to deflect anger over the regime's inability to meet the spiritual and material needs of Iran's burgeoning youthful population, it is also a bold stroke by a non-Arab leader to grab the centre stage of power and influence in the broader Muslim world.

To drive home the point, Ahmadinejad shortly thereafter marched at the head of tens of thousands of young demonstrators in Tehran burning Israeli (and American) flags to a public square where he again dismissed the “myth that Jews were massacred” in the Holocaust and

suggested that the Jewish state – every bit as much a rightful member of the UN as Iran – be removed to Austria, Canada or Alaska.

Tehran's state-controlled media quickly echoed their president's death wish against Israel, and also against its Jewish and non-Jewish supporters who place Zionism “above God, religion and the prophets,” by unveiling two new films that deny the Holocaust and validate the conspiracies of *The Protocols of The Elders of Zion*, a notorious anti-Semitic forgery.

Meanwhile, not a single Arab or Muslim government has condemned Tehran's pre-genocidal campaign. Perhaps government leaders remember how former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri – murdered last year by Syrian agents – had earlier got on the wrong side of Damsacus' Bashir Assad.

In 2001, Hariri courageously cancelled an international Holocaust Deniers' Conference, scheduled for Beirut and organized by Jürgen Graf, a professional bigot who fled Switzerland to Tehran after being sentenced to jail for defaming the memory of Hitler's victims.

Among those invited to Beirut was National Alliance head William L. Pierce, author of the infamous racist tract, *The Turner Diaries*, that served as blueprint for Timothy McVeigh's terrorist attack in Oklahoma City.

President Ahmadinejad – who first earned an advanced revolutionary degree during the 1979 US Embassy hostage crisis – personifies the near-triumph of the 21st century's most dangerous ideology. No, not theocratic Islamic extremism, though that's menacing enough. Rather, the ideology of Holocaust Denial, transmuted from European bigots into the Arab and Muslim mainstream – where it has come to serve as the great unifier coalescing haters – Arab and Persian, Muslim and Christian – across every ethnic, religious, and ideological line.

Despite recent condemnation, the world continues to give Mideast hatemongers mixed signals. In June 2005, UN Secretary Kofi Annan described the world body as “emerging from the ashes of the Holocaust” to rectify great evils like Jew hatred.

But the UN General Assembly has failed to even

censure Tehran for threatening genocide against a member state and at the recent UN Palestine Day, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appeared in front of a map of the Mideast minus Israel.

It's beginning to dawn on some world leaders that we are approaching a 21st century “Munich moment.” Will Washington succumb to threats that Iran would activate a terrorist network to “burn” American cities if the world takes action against their nuclear program? Will the European Union seek to appease Tehran's official policy of Jew-hatred in hopes that any toxic fallout will be limited to the Middle East? After the riots in France, suicide bombings in London and Islamist murder in Holland, everyone, even Iran's longtime ally, France, knows that they are *all* in the crosshairs of terror and hate.

And we all know that 2006 is different than 1938. Now, global delivery systems of propaganda *and* weapons of mass destruction exist to fulfill Hitler's blueprint. But in the dawn of the New Year, the jury is still out whether the world has the will to thwart Tehran's twin threats before it is too late.