

**Pentagon chief: War with Iran would be 'disastrous'**  
**By Amir Oren, Haaretz Correspondent**  
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**A war with Iran would be "disastrous on a number of levels," according to U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.**

**In an article appearing in the latest issue of Parameters, the U.S. Army War College quarterly, Gates wrote that with the army already bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan, "another war in the Middle East is the last thing we need" - despite the fact that Iran "supports terrorism," is "a destabilizing force throughout the Middle East and Southwest Asia and, in my judgment, is hell-bent on acquiring nuclear weapons."**

Nevertheless, he continued, "the military option must be kept on the table, given the destabilizing policies of the regime and the risks inherent in a future Iranian nuclear threat, either directly or through nuclear proliferation."

Gates offered these remarks on Iran as commentary on how to apply an axiom uttered by General Fox Connor in the early 20th century: "Never fight unless you have to." But this is not the first time he has warned against war with Iran; he also did so in a speech at West Point, the U.S. military academy, three months ago. The current article is based on that speech.

Any statement by Gates bears special importance because Barack Obama, the Democratic presidential hopeful who generally opposes the current administration's foreign and defense policy, has praised Gates lavishly and even hinted that he might ask him to retain his post under an Obama presidency.