

Is Iran a Threat to Global Security? Notes on Dr. Zogby's "Dealing with Iran"

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Dr. James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute and brother of the well-known pollster John Zogby, recently published an article on "Dealing with Iran" in the [Huffington Post](#)

that is problematic on a number of grounds. See "http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-zogby/israel-iran-nuclear-_b_1254542.html"

To begin with, Dr. Zogby claims that Iran harbors "aspirations for regional hegemony," and it is therefore a "threat" to its neighbors: "Make no mistake, the regime in Tehran is a meddlesome menace and their aspirations for regional hegemony do pose a threat, not to Israel . . . but to the Arab Gulf States." Dr. Zogby goes even one step further, arguing that Iran is more than just a threat; it is "the real danger to its ... its neighbors."

Israel's Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar recently admitted (boastfully) that the Israeli government had succeeded in distracting the attention of the entire world away from the Palestinians to the Iranians. Dr. Zogby's argument that Iran is "the real danger to its neighbors" shows that Mr. Sa'ar is, indeed, justified in boasting about the fantastic success of Israel's policy of distraction. Instead of blaming the US-Israeli axis of aggression for the never-ending and escalating turbulence in the Middle East, Dr. Zogby blames Iran!

But let us examine Dr. Zogby's allegation in light of reality: (1) Iran has not invaded (or threatened invasion of) any country for over 250 years. (2) Iran was invaded in 1980 by Saddam Hussein, which culminated in the devastating 8-year war—a war that was instigated, supported and sustained by Western powers and their proxy regimes in the Persian Gulf region. (3) The "Arab Gulf States," headed by the Saudi kingdom, are collaborating with the US-Israeli axis of aggression in their efforts to destabilize and overthrow the Iranian government. (4) The "Arab Gulf States," not Iran, serve (literally) as military bases of Western powers that support Israel and its policies of settlements and occupation.

Against this background, Dr. Zogby's claim that Iran is a "meddlesome menace" is obviously counterfactual and preposterous.

Ironically, Dr. Zogby's claim that Iran poses "the real danger to its neighbors" is flatly rejected by the Arab people. Public opinion polls have consistently shown that the overwhelming majority of the Arab neighbors of Iran view the U.S. and Israel as the real threats, not Iran. For example, the most recent (2011) and most comprehensive [public opinion survey](#) to date, which covered 12 Arab/Muslim countries and 16,731 face-to-face interviews, and which was conducted by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

(ACRPS), found that “by a 15-1 ratio, Israel and the US are seen as more threatening than Iran.”

Since Dr. Zogby does not tell his readers why or how Iran is “the real danger to its neighbors,” let me offer an explanation for his allegation. The “threat” he is talking about is not a military threat. Nor is it a threat to Arab people or their territory—Iran has no territorial ambitions. It is, rather, the threat to the autocratic Arab rulers; a threat that results from Iran’s example or model of national sovereignty, not its “aspirations for regional hegemony,” as Dr.Zogby claims. As Iran’s policies of national independence and resistance to external pressure make the client Arab regimes look bad in the eyes of the Arab people, they tend to discredit and threaten their dictatorial rulers. And as those policies earn respect from the Arab people, they also earn the wrath of the Arab leaders. This means that Dr.Zogby’s arguments against the Iranian government reflect the views of the dictatorial Arab leaders, and their imperialist backers, not those of the Arab people.

One salutary point in Dr. Zogby’s article seems to be his advice against military threats against Iran. Unfortunately, he does so for the wrong reasons; he opposes military actions against Iran not because such actions would be unlawful and immoral, but because (a) military threats “only serve to embolden Iran,” which is not clear why or how; and (b) “continued targeted sanctions...are having a real impact.”

Dr. Zogby is either uniformed about the sanctions on Iran, or uses a peculiar definition of targeted sanctions. The brutal sanctions imposed on Iran are way beyond targeted sanctions; they are a most comprehensive sanctions, designed to be “crippling” as they include Iran’s oil exports and its banks, which, in effect, means its international trade. Targeted sanctions are almost always expanded to broader, comprehensive sanctions, as has been the case with Iran. Furthermore, sanctions are essentially a disguised and an insidious form of war whose primary victims are the poor, the children, the elderly, and the infirm. And when sanctions fail to bring about “regime change,” military actions follow logically “to do the job.”

In his article Dr. Zogby also writes (with a dash of sarcasm) :“What, one might ask the leaders of Iran, will they do with their nuclear program and their provocation? Can it feed their people, rebuild their neglected and decayed infrastructure, give hope to their unemployed young, or secure their role in the community of nations? . . . As the Gulf States make significant progress, providing a model for development and growth, Iran remains trapped in an archaic system which feeds off of fear and anger, and goes nowhere.”

It is only fair to ask Dr. Zogby: how can “Arab Gulf States provide a model of development for Iran” when they are essentially consumers markets for foreign products? What product line, manufacturing process or technological know-how can Iran learn from these states Dr.Zogby seems to confuse financial services, extravagant consumerism (made possible by abundant oil and smaller populations), unrestricted import of luxury goods from abroad, glossy shopping malls, ballooning skyscrapers, and man-made islands with manufacturing, industrialization, labor productivity and real development. With the exception of oil, which is produced, processed and managed largely with the help foreign experts, Persian Gulf kingdoms do not produce much of what they consume.

By contrast, Iran produces much of what it needs or consumes. It has made considerable progress in scientific research and technological know-how.It has taken advantage of the

imperialist sanctions and boycotts to become self-reliant in many technological areas.

For example, Iran is now self-sufficient in producing many of its industrial products such as home and electric appliances (television sets, washers and dryers, refrigerators, washing machines, and the like), textiles, leather products, pharmaceuticals, agricultural products, processed food, and beverage products. The country has also made considerable progress in manufacturing steel, copper products, paper, rubber products, telecommunications equipment, cement, and industrial machinery. Iran has the largest operational stock of industrial robots in West Asia.

Iran's progress in automobile and other motor vehicle production has especially been impressive. Motor vehicles, including farming equipment, now count among Iran's exports. Most remarkable of Iran's industrial progress, however, can be seen in the manufacture of various types of its armaments needs. Iran's defense industry has taken great strides in the past few decades, and now manufactures many types of arms and equipment. Iran's Defense Industries Organization (DIO) now produces its own tanks, armored personnel carriers, guided missiles, radar systems, military vessels, submarines, fighter planes, and more. Despite these achievements, Iran's military spending is relatively modest. For example, while Iran's military spending is currently about \$7 billion, or nearly 2% of its GDP, that of Saudi Arabia is about \$43 billion, or nearly 11.2% of its GDP, and that of Israel is about \$13 billion, or 6.3% of its GDP. And while Iran produces most of its military equipment at home, Saudi Arabia imports its military hardware ([source](#)).

Contrary to Dr. Zogby's claims, Iran's military preparedness and its nuclear program, have not meant neglect of its infrastructure. Iran has, indeed, invested considerably in both physical infrastructures (such as transportation and communication) and soft/social infrastructures (such as education and healthcare services). Health care is free for those who can't pay. All public education, including university, is free.

Although women are required to comply with the official dress code, they are encouraged (both by their families and the government) to excel in educational and professional pursuits. The results have been quite impressive. Women now constitute the majority of university students. Despite the very high level of unemployment, which is largely due to the criminal economic sanctions and military threats from abroad, more and more women are joining the workforce. They are doctors, engineers, teachers, scientists, writers, artists, business owners, salespersons, firefighters and taxi drivers. Working women in Iran are entitled to 90 days of maternity leave at two-thirds pay, with the right to return to their previous jobs. Women in the US do not have these benefits. Sex change operations and abortion under certain circumstances (and before the ensoulment, i.e. during the first four months of pregnancy) are legal.

In a number of the "Arab Gulf States," by contrast, women can't hold public office, are denied the right to vote, cannot get a university education, drive a car, or even leave home without a chaperone. How or why Dr. Zogby thinks that these states can "provide a model of development and progress for Iran" is unfathomable.

Dr. Zogby also chides Iran for not supporting the ongoing efforts by the US and its allies, including the "Arab Gulf States," to overthrow the Syrian regime. Yet, there is [undeniable evidence](#) that the Syrian opposition is hatched largely by NATO, Israel and their cringing allies in the Arab League. "The Free Syria Army (FSA) fighting against Assad inside Syria is a creation of NATO. Sources indicate 600 to 1,500 fighters from the Islamic Fighting Group in

Libya, now known as al-Qaeda in Libya, are working with the FSA to topple the Assad regime. An Arab League report revealed last month that Mossad, MI6, the CIA, and British SAS are in Syria working with the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian National Council." It is a shame that Dr.Zogby would allow himself to support this orgy of mercenary forces, benignly called the "Syrian opposition."

In his Article Dr.Zogby refers to the Persian Gulf simply as the "Gulf," without the word "Persian." I suspect this omission is not fortuitous. Let me explain why. As mentioned earlier, Iran's resistance to US-Israeli axis of aggression infuriates the autocratic Arab rulers as such resistance to injustice, which Dr.Zogby calls Iran's "provocations," exposes the complicity of these rulers with the imperialist-Zionist powers in the occupation and militarization of their lands. To counter this "problem" and to turn the Arab public opinion against Iran, the Arab client regimes (with the help of their imperialist patrons) have in recent years cooked up a scheme that is based on a harebrained idea that the word "Persian" should be dropped from the name of Persian Gulf and replaced with the word "Arab," that is, it should be the Arab Gulf, not the Persian Gulf! The scheme is, obviously, part of an insidious strategy that is designed to pit the Persians/Iranians against the Arabs and the Shias against the Sunnis. Regrettably, Dr.Zogby seems to have fallen for this age-old *divide-and-conquer* ploy.

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