

The Attack on the Nuclear Deal, the “Israel Factor”, and the “Iran Peace Scare”

By [Stephen J. Sniegoski](#)

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“...for the Israeli government and Israel’s American lobby, Iran’s alleged nuclear threat has served the same purpose as Saddam’s non-existent WMD—it generates public support against a target that is designated for other reasons...”

American critics are going all out to derail President Obama’s nuclear deal with Iran, which also involves the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council — Britain, France, China, and Russia — plus Germany. (This group is referred to as the “P5 + 1,” in which the U.S. has taken the lead in negotiating with Iran.) The agreement seeks to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapons program in return for the gradual lifting of economic sanctions, but the critics are trying to portray the proposed pact as having just the opposite effect. The agreement will ultimately lead, they aver, to a nuclear armed Iran that will dominate the Middle East and become a major threat to American security.

On August 5, in a major speech at American University in Washington, Obama put forth a strong defense against the critics and even referred to what had heretofore been taboo topics, which are now so much in the open that they cannot be hidden. Obama made reference to Israel’s role in opposing the agreement and pointed out that the advocates in the U.S. who pushed for the war on Iraq, having a pro-force “mindset,” are now in the vanguard of the opposition to the treaty with Iran. What he did not do was to make a connection between Israel and the pro-force “mindset” group, or use the term “neoconservative” to better distinguish the latter group.[1] But he definitely got the point across to those who are in the know. As Paul Pillar, a former top CIA analyst, points out, Obama could not spell out the entire truth, in which the aforementioned issues would be only a part, because he needs “to maintain enough political correctness about Iran (and about Israel) to get the nuclear agreement through the Congressional gauntlet and across the finish line.”[2]



This essay unavoidably repeats some of the Obama administration’s defense of the agreement in order to go beyond what it has said and make the case that the ultimate effect of the criticism of the deal, whether realized by particular American critics or not, is to protect the interests of Israel, as those interests are perceived by the Israeli right, and that this has little to do with any alleged Iranian development of nuclear weaponry but rather reflects the Israeli fear of Iran attaining the status of an upstanding member of the world community as a result of this agreement.

Although there is no firm evidence that Iran ever had a nuclear weapons program, the agreement puts that country under the toughest type of inspections in the history of nuclear non-proliferation. Iran will be required to place limits on what it can do in the nuclear area that far exceed the requirements of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), of which it is a signatory. For example, it must give up 98 percent of its enriched uranium, all of its plutonium producing capacity (which could be used for nuclear weapons), and two-thirds of its centrifuges (which are used to enrich uranium).[3]

What Iran will not have to do is give up a nuclear program that includes enrichment of uranium. However, Iran will only be permitted to enrich uranium to a very limited degree, not more than 3.67 percent, which is sufficient only for nuclear power. This will preclude it not only from developing weapons but also from various civilian activities, such as some medical applications. Critics, however, are vehemently opposed to allowing Iran to engage in nuclear enrichment altogether, demanding that its existing nuclear enrichment capability be dismantled. This would prevent Iran from having a full-fledged peaceful nuclear energy program and would make it dependent on outside sources for nuclear fuel, which could be blocked.

The critics' position, however, would seem to seriously conflict with the position of the NPT, which stipulates in Article IV that signatories have "the inalienable right . . . to develop research, production, and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes." The right to peaceful use of nuclear energy is considered one of the "three pillars" of the NPT, the other two being non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. The NPT actually obligates nuclear powers to help countries to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, which is a significant reason that countries without nuclear weapons would join the treaty. While the U.S. has sometimes successfully pressured countries not to engage in nuclear enrichment (Taiwan being one example), it does nothing to try to stop NPT members Germany, Japan, and Brazil from doing this.

The critics, however, imply that such a right is contingent upon Iran's not having any past infractions of the NPT, but this is not part of the law, and reflects the proclivity of people in the United States—and sometimes the U.S. government—to assume the right to unilaterally interpret international laws and apply those interpretations to other countries, which could even serve to justify attacks by the United States. Thus, critics of the agreement have claimed that the U.S. might find it necessary to attack Iranian nuclear installations, or support a comparable Israeli attack, even if the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—the international watchdog agency charged with verifying compliance—had not discovered any Iranian effort to develop nuclear weapons. Obviously, this approach represents a complete rejection of impartial international law and implies that the powerful determine what is right by virtue of their power.[4]

Critics contend that Iran will inevitably cheat since it will have clandestine sites involved in nuclear weapons development. However, with high tech surveillance it would seem to be virtually impossible to hide suspicious sites. And the agreement will allow for the IAEA inspectors to inspect any sites (not just Iran's acknowledged nuclear program sites), including military bases, suspected of being involved in nuclear activity. Iran's violations of this agreement could mean that the lifted economic sanctions would "snap back" into place.

What the critics rail about here is that in regard to the suspicious, undeclared sites, the inspectors would not have "anytime, anywhere" access, but rather, in order for inspections to take place, there could be a delay of up to 24 days to allow for dispute resolution and

with only “managed access.” However, the allowed inspections of these suspected sites will still be far more robust and intrusive than the current NPT procedures. The NPT’s “Additional Protocol,”[5] which first opened suspected undeclared sites to inspection, does not set any time limit to a delay so that a country can legitimately prevent access to its undeclared sites by engaging in interminable negotiations.[6]

“Managed access” is an inspection approach which is intended to protect a country’s legitimate military and industrial secrets while not limiting the IAEA’s ability to carry out its verification activities. Making any site deemed suspect completely open for inspection could conceivably reveal national security secrets having nothing to do with a clandestine nuclear weapons program, and even facilitate the efforts of enemies to attack that country. The United States maintains “managed access” along with a “national security exclusion” to limit IAEA inspection of its sites.

Undoubtedly, if any country needs to prevent enemies from discovering its national security secrets, it would be Iran. American and Israeli intelligence agencies have engaged in espionage, sabotage (in which cyber-sabotage loomed large), and assassination efforts aimed at Iran. Both Israeli and American leaders still talk about using a “military option” against it. Having clearer knowledge of Iran’s national security secrets could facilitate attacks, thus making them more likely to occur. And these attacks could be on targets having nothing to do with any clandestine nuclear program since those Americans and Israelis hostile toward Iran want to reduce the country’s overall military and economic power.

While critics claim that Iran could clean up such suspect sites, removing all traces of nuclear activity, it has been pointed out that it would be virtually impossible to eliminate all traces of radioactivity in that limited time period. Moreover, any delay would alert the United States and the rest of the world that the suspect site needed a close look and their spy agencies would supplement the work of the IAEA.

Also, as the agreement was signed “the issue of Iran accounting for its alleged past work has emerged as a flash point in the debate between Congress and the White House.”[7] Critics don’t seem to want just an Iranian explanation for past nuclear activities, but rather a confession of guilt, since the current Iranian explanations are unacceptable to them.[8] The administration has acknowledged that a confession of having a secret nuclear weapons program is unlikely, but that such a confession was not essential in verifying Iran’s actions in the future. [9] Top administration officials have emphasized that the nuclear accord with Iran rests on meticulous investigation, not on Iran’s trustworthiness. If Iran were regarded as completely trustworthy, there would be no need for this more stringent deal and Iran would simply be expected to abide by the existing NPT.

However, to deal with the historical issue, allegations that Iran is on the verge of having nuclear weapons have been made for decades, but the actual development of nuclear weaponry never occurs. In short, it would seem apparent that Iran has chosen not to develop nuclear weapons, and it is even less likely to do so under a more robust inspections regime.[10]

The idea that the United States needs far more guarantees regarding Iran than any other country ever involved in nuclear non-proliferation is hard to fathom given its agreements with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. As Graham Allison points out in *The Atlantic*: “The Soviet Union was not known for integrity in international relations. According to Lenin’s

operational codes, it was the Soviet leader's duty to deceive capitalists and outmaneuver them. True to character, Moscow cheated, for example, in placing radars in locations prohibited by the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. But in reviewing the history, it is hard to escape the conclusion that its cheating was marginal, not material.”[11]

The Soviet Union's cheating may have been “marginal” but its potential danger to the United States was, at least theoretically, far greater than anything posed by Iran. As hard-liners, including the neocons, at that time contended, Soviet cheating could give it significant nuclear weapons superiority over the United States. In such a situation, they warned, the United States might be willing to make major concessions to the Soviet Union—which continued over time would end up as a “de facto” surrender—in the belief that the Soviet Union might think it could effectively decimate the United States in a first strike without suffering irreparable damage by any retaliation.

In contrast, the United States faces no comparable risk in the current agreement with Iran. The far more intrusive inspections, the vast improvement of surveillance devices over those that existed during the Cold War, and the much smaller size of Iran compared to the Soviet Union, would seem to make the likelihood of Iran cheating successfully much less than that of the Soviet Union. Moreover, even in the very unlikely event (anything not illogical being possible) that Iran would illicitly develop a nuclear weapon, there would not seem to be any reason that it would, or even could, attack the United States, which could easily decimate it.

But what about Israel? Iranian officials have spoken of eliminating Zionism, meaning the Zionist control of the state. This has been trumpeted by critics of Iran as meaning the nuclear annihilation of the territory controlled by Israel and essentially the mass murder of Jews. Mike Huckabee (former governor of Arkansas), who is seeking the Republican nomination for president, said that Obama's deal with Iran would “take the Israelis and march them to the door of the oven.”[12] (This is presumably a Holocaust analogy though it dispenses with gas chambers, which, in conventional accounts, were used as the major killing instrument.)

Even in its rhetoric, Iran has not said that it would militarily attack Israel, despite Western media commentary to the contrary. Eliminating Zionism could by comparison be equated with the past American goal of “eliminating Communism”, which did not entail exterminating Russians or even attacking the Soviet Union. Moreover, regarding any comparison to the Holocaust, it should be noted that, outside of Israel, Iran has the largest Jewish community in the Middle East, which lives in relative safety.

Even if Iran should quickly start a nuclear weapons program (a development that the agreement would serve to prevent), with the few nuclear bombs that it could develop in the foreseeable future, any attack on Israel would bring about a massive nuclear retaliation. Furthermore, Israel is noted as having developed one of the most advanced missile defense systems, which could very likely provide sufficient protection against the very limited nuclear attack that Iran would be able to mount. And even in the extremely unlikely event (again, anything not illogical is not impossible) that Iran, at some future date, were able to effectively cripple Israel, Israel has nuclear-armed submarines that would be virtually impossible for Iran to counter. Thus, while Iran's ability to knock out Israel would be highly improbable, Israeli nuclear retaliation would in all likelihood guarantee the incineration of all Iranian cities –and also kill most of the rest of the population by radiation—and essentially bring about the destruction of the Islamic State of Iran.

Anti-Iran propaganda wails that Iran's leaders are apt to launch a suicide attack on Israel regardless of the consequences because they are religious fanatics indifferent to death, an attitude stemming from their purported firm belief in an afterlife in which they would be rewarded for their willingness to launch a nuclear jihad against the Zionist infidels. But there is no real evidence, in terms of either theological belief or past behavior, that this would be the case. For example, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei declared nuclear weaponry to be forbidden as a violation of Islamic principles, as likewise did his predecessor, Ayatollah Khomeini. Moreover, in engaging in any type of warlike actions, Iran has moved with great caution, relying almost always on propaganda and aid to allies. There is no evidence that the Iranian leadership would be willing to sacrifice their country, or their own lives (note that they tend to reach old age, eschewing many possible opportunities to achieve martyrdom), which would be the case in a nuclear war.

It should also be emphasized that Israel's input in driving American political opinion against Iran's nuclear program, highlighted by Prime Minister Netanyahu's address to the U.S. Congress on March 3, 2015[13], reaches the heights of irony since the Jewish state is not even a signatory of the NPT and does not allow any inspections whatsoever of its top secret nuclear weapons program. Furthermore, Israel has been in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 487, which specifically called for Israel to put its own nuclear facilities under the safeguards of the IAEA. This resolution was passed by the UN Security Council in June 1981, with no country opposing and or abstaining, and this included the United States (during the Reagan administration). [14] Needless to say, this resolution is never mentioned by the mainstream American media or political establishment, which have presented international resolutions directed against Syria, Iran, Iraq (when ruled by Saddam) and other designated enemies of the US and/or Israel as the virtual equivalent of Holy Writ.

Of course, the U.S. is an abettor of Israel here. Although the U.S. Department of State professes that "the United States remains firmly committed to the goal of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction,"[15] it does nothing to pressure Israel to abide by the NPT and makes every effort to prevent other nations from trying to put pressure on Israel to do so.[16]

The U.S. does not even officially acknowledge that Israel has nuclear weapons despite having known so for years.[17] When the late Helen Thomas, then considered the dean of the White House press corps, dared to query Barack Obama on this taboo issue in 2009, the president, after some verbal bobbing and weaving, responded: "With respect to nuclear weapons, you know, I don't want to speculate." [18] Were it really true that a U.S. president did not do everything possible to find out what countries in the world had nuclear arsenals, much less fail to even engage in speculation on this vital subject, one would think that such lethargy regarding America's security would lead to demands for immediate impeachment and removal from office. But the supine American mainstream media, like the proverbial three monkeys—hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil—played along with Israel's desires and criticized Thomas for asking the question. And Israel's votaries were, of course, enraged. One thing led to another, culminating in a video recording by a pro-Zionist rabbi of some of her off-the-cuff remarks about Zionist Jews that made her appear as anti-Semitic (very elderly people, as was the 89-year-old Thomas, often tend to be lacking in circumspection), and her once notable career was brought to an ignoble end, at least from the mainstream perspective.[19]

United States action, or lack of action, regarding Israel's nuclear weapons program may actually violate the NPT. There is considerable evidence that Israel relied on material and

technology from the United States in order to develop its nuclear weapons arsenal. Having studied declassified U.S. government documents on Israel's nuclear weapons program, Grant Smith, an investigative reporter and author who heads the Institute for Research: Middle East Policy, has shown that Israeli spies—including Netanyahu—have stolen material from the United States for the Jewish state's nuclear weapons program. Smith further stated that "the ongoing clandestine movement of material and technology out of the U.S. may mean America has violated Article 1 of the NNPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty], since according to the GAO it has never apparently taken successful efforts to stem the flow." [20]

It should be added that the United States government in its relations with Israel also violates its own domestic law regarding the nuclear weapons issue. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended by the Symington Amendment of 1976 and the Glenn Amendment of 1977 prohibits U.S. military assistance to countries that acquire or transfer nuclear reprocessing technology when they do not abide by IAEA rules and permit inspections. A special waiver is needed to provide aid in such cases, and this approach has been used for Pakistan, another non-signatory of the NPT with nuclear weapons. But, in line with Israel's wishes, the United States government does not want to publicly recognize Israel's nuclear weapons, and thus eschews this approach here. Hence, it directly violates federal law in its provision of aid to Israel, which is America's foremost military aid recipient. [21]

The obvious effect of America's position on nuclear weapons in the Middle East is thus not to promote a nuclear-free area but to guarantee a nuclear weapons monopoly for Israel. While this seems perfectly fair to many Americans, it is understandable why the United States is not seen as an honest broker in the Middle East and in much of the rest of the world. From an objective point of view, this would be an appropriate analysis since the U.S. applies a different standard to Israel than to other countries in that region.

Of course, the critics of the nuclear deal claim that while Iran cannot be trusted to have even a peaceful nuclear program, Israel would never use its nuclear weapons except to protect the actual survival of its people—usually topping it off with "from another Holocaust" in order to solidify its moral justification for possessing these weapons. Of course, the question is how early in any conflict Israel would claim the threat of another Holocaust. It could conceivably be used in a preventive attack, which is what some of the critics believe should be taken against Iran right now. Ultra-hawkish neocon Daniel Pipes, for example, cites the use of nuclear weapons as one of three possible scenarios for an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear program (the other two scenarios being conventional bombing from airplanes and special ops). He writes: "Nuclear weapons. This doomsday weapon, which tends to be little discussed, would probably be launched from submarines. It hugely raises the stakes and so would only be resorted to, in the spirit of 'Never Again,' if the Israelis were desperate." [22] It should be noted that Pipes makes no effort here to qualify the nuclear attack as consisting only of very low yield, tactical nuclear bombs but instead categorizes the devices as "doomsday" weapons.

While Pipes only presents what he thinks might happen, there is additional information on how Israel has treated its nuclear arsenal. Grant Smith points out that "[a]s understood by the CIA back in the early 1960s, Israel's nuclear arsenal is primarily used to coerce the United States to provide enough benefits that they will never have to be used." [23] The threat need not be made overtly, though sometimes it has been. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War when the Egyptians achieved early military successes against Israel, though they did not cross its boundaries, Israel is said to have started preparations for a nuclear strike. This caused the United States to quickly strip its armed forces in Europe of equipment

and airlift it to Israel, thus enabling the Israeli military to defeat its foes by conventional means.[24] But what would Israel have done if the U.S. had not taken such swift action? A nuclear strike was apparently a strong option.

It should also be pointed out that estimates of Israel's nuclear arsenal range from 75 to 400 nuclear weapons, with, at least, the higher figures going far beyond what is needed for a deterrent against its Middle East adversaries. This number of nuclear weapons along with Israel's long-range ballistic missiles and submarines make it a potential nuclear threat to many countries far outside the Middle East region.

Now getting back to the Iran nuclear deal: some criticism holds that even if Iran should faithfully abide by all the requirements of the nuclear deal, the agreement has time limits, and once these expire in fifteen years, Iran would begin to develop nuclear weaponry, and would be in a better position than ever to do so because of its vast increase in wealth resulting from the termination of the sanctions. "All Iran has to do is take the patience pathway to a nuclear weapon," opines Mark Dubowitz, executive director of the neocon Foundation for Defense of Democracies.[25]

Now this is completely the opposite of the way the United States looked upon the former Soviet Union and China, in which it was maintained that trade and economic development make countries much less inclined toward aggression, and much more willing to accept the existing international order. There is no reason to assume that this would be different for Iran.

Moreover, as the Obama administration points out, there is also no reason, whatsoever, to think that other countries, including European ones, would retain their sanctions on Iran, especially since Iran has shown itself willing to make considerable concessions. And the sanctions already are crumbling. Switzerland, which, being neutral, had its own limited sanctions, has lifted them. And France, Germany and Italy are among the European Union countries acting as if sanctions have already been lifted, with their officials, government and private, going to Iran to set up profitable business and financial deals.[26]

Furthermore, the idea that the United States could bomb Iran's sites involved in nuclear enrichment—and, presumably, to continue to do so every few years to prevent their redevelopment—would be a gross violation of international law that would severely harm its standing in the world. Instead of being a global leader, the United States would become more like a global pariah.

The latter criticism segues to the claim that any agreement with Iran should go beyond the nuclear issue, and deal with Iran's missiles, involvement in other countries, lack of democracy, incarceration of American citizens, and other miscellaneous concerns. It is argued that the termination of the sanctions would not only show indifference to these glaring evils but would actually make Iran more dangerous in some of these areas. Neocon Dov S. Zackheim writes: "More ominously, Iran will now be flush with cash, with tens of billions of dollars accruing from both petroleum sales and the lifting of financial sanctions. No doubt Tehran will put that money to good use: increasing its support for Hezbollah, Hamas, Hafez Assad and the Houthi rebels; destabilizing Bahrain, Saudi Arabia's eastern province; and extending its terrorist reach worldwide." [27]

This claim is not likely to be true. As Vali Nasr, dean of the School of Advanced International

Studies at Johns Hopkins University, points out: “Iran spent \$15 billion on its military last year. By comparison, Saudi Arabia spent \$80 billion, and the five other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) spent another \$35 billion. The Arab countries most worried about Iranian mischief outspent Iran by a margin of 8 to 1. Iran does not have an air force, and its ground forces and navy lag technologically behind its rivals. The nuclear deal will only widen this gap. At a summit at Camp David in May, President Obama promised GCC countries more military hardware and assistance to improve their ability to police the region. Meanwhile, under the terms of the nuclear deal, Iran would have to wait another five years for a U.N.-imposed arms embargo to be lifted.” (Nasr maintains that Iran signed the agreement to calm internal opposition, which was chafing at the sanctions’ negative impact on the economy, and to focus on the danger from ISIS, which threatens Iranian interests not only by being in Iraq but also by coming into neighboring Afghanistan.) [28]

Furthermore, Iran has various grievances, too, and could easily charge its enemies—the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and some of the Gulf States—with oppressing their subjects, aiding rebels, destabilizing countries, and supporting terrorism. In fact, it is the interventionist actions of these countries to which much of Iran’s interventionism is a defensive reaction. [29]

It should also be noted that the U.S. supported Saddam’s Iraq in its war against Iran during the 1980s. The United States deployed in the Persian Gulf its largest naval force since the Vietnam War, the purpose of which was allegedly to protect oil tankers, but which engaged in serious attacks on Iran’s navy. Furthermore, US satellite intelligence facilitated Iraqi gas attacks against Iranian troop concentrations. Moreover, Washington allowed Iraq to purchase poisonous chemicals, and even strains of anthrax and bubonic plague, from American companies, which were subsequently identified as key components of the Iraqi biological warfare program by a 1994 investigation conducted by the U.S. Senate Banking Committee. The United States also prevented or weakened UN resolutions condemning Iraq for using chemical weapons. [30]

Administration defenders of the nuclear accord also point out that including these additional issues in the agreement—which would essentially require Iran to significantly change its foreign and domestic policies, after acknowledging the evil nature of what currently exists—would make a nuclear agreement with it impossible. But it is the nuclear issue that has been presented by Iran’s critics as being the principal danger to American interests and to the world in general, not such things as Iran’s support for Hezbollah and the Houthis or the lack of human rights in Iran.

Moreover, as a historical analogy, it should be noted that the United States negotiated and concluded the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) with the Soviet Union at the same time that the Soviets had invaded Czechoslovakia and provided support for North Vietnam against the United States. What the critics’ effort to tack on these additional issues to the nuclear agreement with Iran tends to illustrate is that for them, Iran’s purported effort to develop nuclear weaponry is not really the major issue, despite the emphasis they placed on this alleged danger, but rather the issue is one of eliminating Iran’s overall power, which would include economic and diplomatic as well as military power, in the region. In short, for the Israeli government and Israel’s American lobby, Iran’s alleged nuclear threat has served the same purpose as Saddam’s non-existent WMD—it generates public support against a target that is designated for other reasons. What goes further to demonstrate the fact that the criticism of the nuclear agreement is not to enhance American security but that of Israel—letting the cat out of the bag, so to speak—is when the critics charge that the

agreement is a betrayal of America's allies—essentially Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States. When this argument is put forth by the neoconservatives and other supporters of Israel, however, the inclusion of Saudi Arabia represents the height of insincerity because before Israel and the Saudis came together to oppose Iran as a common enemy, they took a very negative view of the Saudis, with Saudi Arabia being targeted by the neocons for regime change and dismantlement.[31]

The goal of the United States should be to protect its own interest, not serve the interests of other countries. It is understandable that Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the small Gulf States might reasonably see Iran as an enemy, but their perceived interests are not necessarily those of the United States. That the Israeli government wants to maintain control of the West Bank and hegemonic power in the Middle East, for instance, is not an interest of the United States; in fact, America's all-out support for Israel, by antagonizing Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere, endangers its own security. As John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt put it bluntly in their bombshell essay, "The Israel Lobby" (later a book), "the United States has a terrorism problem in good part because it is so closely allied with Israel." [32]

As for Saudi Arabia, Iran has been its rival for dominance of the Gulf region since before the advent of the Islamic Republic. The rivalry existed when the Shah, a close U.S. ally, ruled Iran, and the outbreak of an overall Shiite-Sunni religious war in the region has heightened it. Furthermore, animosity between Sunnis and Shiites has existed for more than a thousand years. That it is inadvisable for the United States to become enmeshed in an internecine war that has nothing to do with its own interests and will create for it more enemies should be an obvious no-brainer.

In regard to Saudi Arabia and Israel being allies of the United States, it is clearly Iran that is doing the most to combat ISIS, which the United States national security leaders have identified as the greatest threat to the nation. Israel is doing nothing and Saudi Arabia's effort is minimal. In fact, wealthy Saudi private citizens provided initial support for ISIS along with aid to other Jihadi groups, doing so with, at the very least, tacit support from the Saudi regime.[33] And the Saudis' effort to defeat the Houthis in Yemen has enabled Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to greatly expand its territorial control in Yemen. AQAP is seen by the U.S. security establishment as the most globally dangerous of the al-Qaeda branches because of the emphasis it places on attacking overseas targets.[34]

In short, Israel is not primarily fearful of a maniacal Iran that will attack it with nuclear bombs or cause havoc in the Middle East with its proxy forces. Rather, its greatest fear is that the nuclear agreement will be the beginning of a rapprochement with the United States that will enable Iran to become an upstanding member of the world community. Iran could aid the United States in helping to bring about stability in the Middle East, which was the traditional goal of United States policy in the region before it became sidetracked by the neocon-inspired destabilization efforts of the Bush II administration. As Robert D. Kaplan, who was named by *Foreign Policy* magazine as one of the world's "top 100 global thinkers," writes in *The Atlantic*, "The United States needs Shia Iran to fight the extremist Sunnis of the Islamic State, and at the same time to pressure the Shia government in Baghdad to moderate its posture toward the Sunnis, in the name of internal stability in Iraq. Should the unhelpful Islamic government in Turkey grow more intractable, Iran could also prove helpful in balancing against it. . . . In addition, Iran and the United States could potentially work in tandem in Syria to preserve the political power of the country's ruling Alawites—the Alawite sect being an offshoot of Shia Islam—even as they work together to remove President Bashar al-Assad from power. Furthermore, Iran could help steady neighboring Afghanistan in

the wake of an American troop withdrawal, by serving as a buffer against pro-Taliban Pakistani and Saudi elements.” [35] Even if the new relationship between the US and Iran never goes this far, it is apparent that American foreign policy experts, at least those outside the orbit of the Israel lobby, see significant benefits to be derived from cooperation with Iran .

Israel is terrified by a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement in which Israel would lose its special relationship with the U.S. and be replaced by Iran.[36] While this fear is overwrought, it nonetheless exists. And there is a considerable degree of truth in this line of thinking. Although it would seem impossible for Iran to actually replace Israel as America’s primary Middle East ally, U.S. cooperation with Iran could lead to a diminution of its all-out support for Israel, which rests on the belief propagated by its American supporters that the Jewish state is by far America’s best and most valuable friend in the Middle East and that the two countries’ interests essentially coincide. The United States might also begin to put pressure on Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians, and Washington might refrain from vetoing every vote against Israel in the UN Security Council. .

Moreover, a U.S./Iran rapprochement would have the effect of making Iran a member of the world community, which, with the elimination of sanctions, would be solidified by its business relations with Western countries. With Iran no longer being viewed as a rogue nation, the international spotlight would tend to fall more on Israel’s uninspected nuclear arsenal and its mistreatment of the Palestinians.

In a worst case scenario from the Israeli perspective, the effects of the nuclear agreement with Iran could spiral into Israel’s global isolation, the only alternative to which would be for Israel to join the NPT; allow for a viable, fully sovereign Palestinian state on the entire West Bank and Gaza; and perhaps even allow for equal rights for Palestinians who live in Israel proper. From the standpoint of the Israeli right, and even many other Israeli Jews, such developments would portend the end of a Jewish exclusivist state, which is Israel’s very *raison d’être*. In essence, a peaceful Iran could be far more dangerous to Israel than one that was perceived as being bellicose.

Now the scenario sketched above is a possibility but far from being a certainty. For Israel and its American lobby are not noted for complacency and will do everything possible to nip this potential danger in the bud.

Remember that this Iran deal is not yet approved by the United States because it is to be voted upon by Congress. Since this is an executive agreement, not a treaty, it does not need to have a two-thirds vote of the Senate for approval.[37] In May, President Obama signed an act that would allow Congress to vote this deal up or down (no amendments). It will have until September 17 to perform this task. If both houses vote no, however, Obama would exercise his veto power, which would require a two-thirds vote in both houses to override. Achieving such a super-majority in Congress to defeat the agreement, which would require considerable support from Democrats, would seem unlikely, but is certainly possible. Moreover, the new president who enters office in January 2017 could undo this executive agreement at his or her will. [38]

All Republican candidates say that they would revoke the agreement. Should Hillary Clinton be the next president, she too might take steps to undermine the agreement, given that her major backer is Haime Saban, who publicly stated that Israel is his fundamental political concern. But the fact of the matter is that America’s allies who have signed the accord are

unlikely to follow along and reinstate sanctions, especially since, as pointed out earlier, they are already acting as if the sanctions have been lifted. And China and Russia almost certainly would not follow the U.S.[39] Without most of the major countries in the world participating in the sanctions, the economic effect on Iran would be negligible.

The indefatigable noninterventionist Justin Raimondo views the Iran deal as a great watershed in American policy and politics, writing in an August 7, 2015 article, titled “The Iran deal is the Israel lobby’s Armageddon,” that the Iran nuclear agreement represents the overall defeat of the Israel lobby and the concomitant elimination of its stranglehold over American Middle East policy. He jubilantly exclaimed: “The bottom line of all this is: if the deal goes through Congress unscathed, the Cheney coup will have been defeated. Our Israel-centric policy of fighting wars on Israel’s behalf will be over: the tail will no longer be wagging the dog. Once we defeat the Israeli-directed attempt to derail the deal in Congress we can safely go out into the streets declaiming: Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we’re free at last!”[40]

In my mind, Raimondo’s joy is hyperbolic. Even if Congress cannot prevent the agreement from going through, the Israel lobby will remain influential enough to cause the U.S. to continue to treat Iran as an enemy and take various hostile actions against it and its ally Syria. Every effort will be made to claim that Iran is violating the treaty and working on a nuclear bomb. Acts of terrorism in the Middle East and throughout the world, especially the United States, will be attributed to the hand of Iran. And it is not inconceivable that Israeli agents might even engage in false flag and black operations to make it appear that Iran is the culprit. [41]

Since this latter reference deals with an ultra-sensitive matter that is apt to be shrugged off as anti-Semitic conspiracy mongering, this essay will expand on it with a little detail. For years stories have circulated that Israeli agents — especially those of Israel’s foreign intelligence agency, the Mossad — have infiltrated Arab terrorist networks and have sometimes actually involved themselves in deceptive terrorist activities designed to appear as the work of Arabs. Observers, for example, allege that the Mossad thoroughly infiltrated the nefarious terrorist group Abu Nidal and turned some of its terrorist activities to Israel’s benefit.^[42] And then there is the notorious Lavon Affair in which even mainstream writers have acknowledged that bombings of Western property in Egypt in 1954, initially assumed to be the work of Arab nationalists, and contributing to the attack on Egypt by Britain and France (and Israel) in 1956, were actually carried out by Egyptian Jews in the service of Israel.^[43]

The possibility that Israel might engage in such deceptive terrorism against the United States was touched on in a study by the Army’s School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), which dealt with the difficulties an international peacekeeping force would face if it were used to maintain an Israeli-Palestine peace. A reference to this study appeared, poignantly, in a front-page article in the *Washington Times* on September 10, 2001 — one day before the terror attacks of 9/11. According to the article, “Of the Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, the SAMS officers say: ‘Wildcard. Ruthless and cunning. Has capability to target U.S. forces and make it look like a Palestinian/Arab act.’”^[44]

Anti-Iran propaganda could persuade a significant portion of the American public that Iran has violated the nuclear agreement and/or that it is engaging in serious terrorist activities. (Specious propaganda obviously works with the American public, as recent history shows.)

That Iran would be seen as double-crossing the United States after making a solemn deal would make the public more hostile than ever toward Iran. Ultimately, the United States might scuttle the agreement and not simply reinstate sanctions but initiate some form of military action. In short, although Israel and its American myrmidons have lost a battle of considerable significance, they are still far from having lost the war for the control of American Middle East policy.

Notes

[1] Obama had used the same “mindset” argument in a previous speech to the Veterans of Foreign War. Michael A. Memoli, “Obama: Critics of Iran deal are the same people who rushed to war with Iraq,” *Stars and Stripes*,

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[2] Paul R. Pillar, “The Disastrous Neocon Mindset,” *ConsortiumNews.com*, August 6, 2015, <https://consortiumnews.com/2015/08/06/the-disastrous-neocon-mindset/>

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[4] As Thucydides described the reality of inter-state relations in his famous Melian Dialogue in his *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, in which the powerful Athenians threaten the much weaker Melians: “The strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they are forced to accept.” Thucydides pointed out that Athens’ aggressive hegemonic actions went too far and ultimately engendered enough opposition to do it harm, though the work ends before Athens’ final defeat. Richard Ned Lebow and Robert Kelly, “Thucydides and Hegemony: Athens and the United States,” *Review of International Studies*, 27:4 (October, 2001), pp. 593-609, <http://polisci2.ucsd.edu/rabarrett/writing/Professional%20Examples/Lebow%20n%20Kelly-Thucydides%20n%20Hegemony-Athens%20and%20the%20US.pdf>

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