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Obama's Iran Policy Commits Him to War

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March 16, 2012

Despite the alleged difference between President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Iran, both embrace a position that logically commits them to war. If war is to be avoided, as Obama says he wishes, he will have to abandon his current stance.

The difference between Obama and Netanyahu is more apparent than real. Both say Iran's possession of a nuclear weapon is "unacceptable." Both have vauntingly put "all options on the table," including the nuclear option. Both say they are willing to give harsh economic sanctions and diplomacy more time.

Some difference seems to exist between where each would draw the "red line." Netanyahu says he cannot tolerate Iran's having even partially finished components and know-how; by that low standard, Iran has already crossed the line. Obama seems to draw the line at actual production or possession of a nuclear weapon. In practice this may be a distinction without a difference, since if Iran were to decide to build a weapon, it certainly would not do it in the open.

That is a big "if," however. Neither American nor Israeli intelligence believes Iran has decided to make a nuclear warhead. For a decade American and Israeli demagogues have said an Iranian bomb is just a few years away. Yet Iran's uranium, which is under the watchful eye of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has not been enriched to weapons grade. Iran insists its nuclear research is for electricity and medicine. Moreover, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei for years has said that Islam forbids possession of nuclear weapons. In February Khamenei repeated,

The Iranian nation has never pursued and will never pursue nuclear weapons. There is no doubt that the decision makers in the countries opposing us know well that Iran is not after nuclear weapons because the Islamic Republic, logically, religiously and theoretically, considers the possession of nuclear weapons a grave sin and believes the proliferation of such weapons is senseless, destructive and dangerous.

One may reasonably be skeptical of what the head of any government says, but one is obliged to present some evidence to contradict a particular claim, especially one made over many years and supported by American intelligence.

At best Obama has bought some time with Netanyahu. The last thing Obama wants before the election is a new war that would, as the least of its consequences, send gasoline prices soaring.

But let's not yet conclude that Obama deserves another Nobel Peace Prize. The time he bought is time in which the Iranian middle and working classes will suffer greatly under the tightening sanctions, which impede the country's ability to sell its oil and to import needed commodities. Food prices are already skyrocketing as the value of the Iranian rial plummets. Innocent people, particularly children, are suffering.

This is reminiscent of the 1990s sanctions on Iraq that killed 500,000 children and fueled the anti-Americanism that led to the attacks on September 11, 2001. One recalls President Clinton's UN ambassador and later secretary of state Madeleine Albright's infamous comment that the murder of those children was "worth it" in the effort to drive Iraqi president Saddam Hussein from power. Will Secretary of State Hillary Clinton say the same thing some day?

The other track Obama touts is diplomacy. But the big question is this: What is there to talk about? Iran's government (with the support of the people) insists it may legally enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. Indeed, it may do so under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which it has signed. But Obama and Netanyahu want Iran to end its enrichment program. When Iran arranged to acquire enriched uranium in a swap with Turkey and Brazil, Obama scotched the deal (after being for it).

So the United States and Israel are making a demand that Iran cannot accept without becoming subservient to them. This it will not do. What then? Considering what Obama ("I don't bluff") and Netanyahu demand, war is the only remaining option. Their objective simply cannot be achieved except by regime change, and the Iranian government cannot be expected to accommodate them.

Obama's adulators desperately want to believe he is a man of peace. They need to wake up.