

Can Israel Survive Obama?

In the spring of 2012, when I wrote *The Last Israelis*, I thought the pessimistic premise of my cautionary tale on Iranian nukes was grounded in realism. I had imagined a U.S. president who passively and impotently reacted to Iran's nuclear ambitions, leaving it to tiny Israel to deal with the threat. But something far worse is happening: The Obama administration is actively making it harder for Israel to neutralize Iran's nukes and more likely that Iran will develop a nuclear arsenal.

A few months after my apocalyptic thriller was published, the *New York Times* reported that "intense, secret exchanges between American and Iranian officials [dating] almost to the beginning of President Obama's term" resulted in an agreement to conduct one-on-one negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. In those secret talks, did Obama long ago concede to Iran a nuclear capability? If so, then the current Geneva negotiations merely provide the international imprimatur for what Iran and the U.S. have already privately agreed. That might explain why France (of all countries) had to reject a Geneva deal that would have left Iran with a nuclear breakout capability.

An investigation by the Daily Beast also reveals that the "Obama administration began softening sanctions on Iran after the election of Iran's new president last June, months before the current round of nuclear talks in Geneva." The report notes that Treasury Department notices show "that the U.S. government has all but stopped the financial blacklisting of entities and people that help Iran evade international sanctions since the election of its president, Hassan Rouhani, in June."

Obama's desperately eager posture toward the smiling mullahs has doomed any negotiation to failure by signaling the U.S. fears confrontation more than anything else. Obama's pathetic approach to the world's most pressing national security threat also makes U.S. military action virtually impossible from a

public relations and diplomatic standpoint because it promotes the naive idea that more diplomacy will resolve what a decade of talking hasn't. And as long as the Iranians are "talking," world opinion will also oppose an Israeli military strike—so naturally Iran will find ways to keep talking until it's too late for Israel to act.

Obama has been downright duplicitous toward key Mideast allies. When in campaign mode or speaking to Israel supporters, Obama emphatically rejected containment as a policy option for dealing with Iranian nukes. But he's now taking steps that effectively make containment the only option available (while repeating the same empty reassurance that he has Israel's back and won't be duped by the smiling Iranians). Despite his repeated reassurances, Obama rejected Israel's estimates for how much more time Iran needs to develop its nuclear capability and accepted overly optimistic timetables that assumed at least a year for more talking. Soon afterward, the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) confirmed. Ignoring these critical facts, Obama has given diplomatic cover to Iran's nuclear program by seizing on the cosmetic changes presented by the Iranian regime's Ahmadinejad-to-Rouhani facelift.

That this makeover is just a ruse becomes obvious from this video, in which Rouhani boasts about masterfully manipulating diplomacy to achieve Iran's nuclear objectives. So Obama must have known all along that "talks" are a fool's errand that allow him to fall back to what has been his position all along: containment.

And despite repeated assurances from Secretary of State John Kerry that "no deal is better than a bad deal," the current Geneva talks appear headed towards precisely that: a bad deal that leaves Iran with the very nuclear breakout capability that a diplomatic "solution" was supposed to prevent.

On the other hand, after Obama's weak response to Syria's crossing of his "red line" against the use of chemical weapons, the threat of U.S. force against Iranian nukes lost

all credibility, making it even harder to change Iranian nuclear behavior without force. So containing the mess produced by weak negotiations is really all that's left of Obama's Iran "strategy."

Only epic ineptitude or anti-Israel hostility no longer checked by reelection considerations can explain Obama's moves on Iran. And the stakes couldn't be higher for the rest of the world. After all, if Iran is the world's biggest state sponsor of terrorism without nuclear weapons, what will terrorism look like once Iran goes nuclear? And there are already hints of the nuclear proliferation nightmare that will follow Iran's nuclearization: Saudi Arabia has Pakistani nukes already lined up for purchase. Remarkably, Obama has known this since 2009 and apparently doesn't care about that consequence any more than he does about Israel's security. How else to explain his acceptance of the dreadful Geneva proposal granting Iran a nuclear weapons capability?

Exacerbating an existential threat against Israel is bad enough, but Obama has been an abysmal ally in other respects. Despite being history's most aggressive president to punish leakers (except when they make him look good), Obama's administration has repeatedly leaked sensitive Israeli information that could have easily provoked a Syrian-Israeli war. Obama summarily dumped a decades-long alliance with Egypt (that is also key to Israeli security) over some Egyptian state violence that is dwarfed by the decades-long brutality and terrorism of the Iranian regime now enjoying Obama's overzealous courtship. And Obama's image as a multilateralist who subordinates U.S. interests to higher principles has been exposed as a fraud following reports that he knew the U.S. was spying on close European allies (contrary to his denials).

Add to that list Kerry's increasing hostility toward Israel and reports that the U.S. plans to impose its undoubtedly risky vision of peace on Israel in a few months, and you have Israel's worst nightmare in the White House. The irony is that the less Israel feels secure because of Obama's betrayals, the less likely it is to behave as Obama would like. Why humor Obama's requests and take unrequited risks for

peace with the Palestinians or indulge yet another round of counterproductive “talks” about Iran’s nuclear program when Obama has apparently abandoned Israel anyway?

As if Israel didn’t face enough threats and challenges, it must now survive the Obama nightmare until he’s out of office in 38 months. With Israel isolated like never before, thanks to Obama, the stark choices facing Israel’s leadership are unimaginably difficult. With roughly 75 times more territory, 10 times as many people and two times as big an economy, Iran is a Goliath compared to Israel and has repeatedly threatened to destroy it. So what does David (Israel) do now that Obama’s perfidy has been exposed? If the neighborhood bully is bigger than you, has threatened you and is reaching for a bat, do you preemptively attack him before he gets the bat and becomes even more dangerous?

Noah Beck is the author of *The Last Israelis*, an apocalyptic novel about Iranian nukes and other geopolitical issues in the Middle East.