

# Obama's New Iran Policy: Is America Drifting toward Appeasement?

by Matthias Küntzel

"I think today is the day in which I witnessed a feature of nuclear war in the Middle East in the future someday that will be part of our children's heritage," stated US Senator Mark Kirk from Illinois in November 2013 after a briefing on Iran conducted by Secretary of State John Kerry. "This administration," he said, "like Neville Chamberlain is yielding a large and bloody conflict in the Middle East involving Iranian nuclear weapons that will now be part of our children's future."<sup>1</sup>

Senator Kirk's statement might sound alarmist, and some may even attribute it to Republican grandstanding. However, in view of the Obama administration's new Iran policy it would be a mistake to dismiss the senator's remark out of hand.

The high point of Washington's former Iran policy was December 23, 2006. On that date, the administration of President George W. Bush succeeded in securing a unanimous resolution at the UN Security Council calling on the mullahs to suspend all uranium enrichment and plutonium projects immediately. At the same time, sanctions were imposed on Iran in order to reinforce those demands.<sup>2</sup>

The watershed moment in establishing a new American policy toward Iran was on November 24, 2013. On that day, in Geneva, the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany approved an interim agreement with Iran that nullified the aforementioned UN resolution.<sup>3</sup> Iran agreed to suspend the

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<sup>1</sup> After Kerry Briefing, Senators Slam White House Over "Chamberlain"-Style Iran Deal & "Anti-Israel" Statements, November 13, 2013, [www.thetower.org/kerry-briefing-senators-slam-white-house-chamberlain-style-iran-deal-anti-israel-statements/](http://www.thetower.org/kerry-briefing-senators-slam-white-house-chamberlain-style-iran-deal-anti-israel-statements/).

<sup>2</sup> Security Council imposes sanctions on Iran for failure to halt uranium enrichment, unanimously adopting resolution 1737 (2006), [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8928.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8928.doc.htm).

<sup>3</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/24/world/meast/iran-deal-text/>.

20 percent uranium enrichment, the 5+1 agreed to suspend elements of the sanctions regime, and both sides agreed to strive to reach a comprehensive solution within six months that would ensure that Iran's nuclear program would be exclusively peaceful.

The White House paved the way for this so-called Geneva Agreement by conducting secret talks with Iran. These negotiations began in March 2013 and gained momentum after the new Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, took the stage in August of that year. These bilateral discussions had already produced an agreed-upon US-Iranian text by the time the first Geneva talks began on November 7.<sup>4</sup>

However, when the French representative saw this first draft, he was troubled. The stumbling block was the plutonium breeder at Arak, a heavy water reactor without any ostensible civilian purpose. The American-Iranian draft suggested that this reactor should not be activated during a six-month period in which its construction could nonetheless continue. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, however, wanted construction to be halted as well and bluntly called the American-Iranian draft a "deal for dummies". It was well known that the activation of the reactor was not possible in any case before the end of 2014 so that the apparent Iranian concession not to activate it during a six-month period was actually no concession at all.<sup>5</sup>

Two weeks later, the 5+1 and Iran adopted the revised version of the Geneva agreement with a footnote that clarified that the Arak reactor could continue to be prepared for activation, but with restrictions.

In January, Rouhani asked a big crowd: "Do you know what the Geneva agreement is?" He then answered: "The Geneva Agreement means the superpower's surrender to the great Iranian nation."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, Rouhani

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<sup>4</sup> Bradley Klapper, Matthew Lee and Julie Pace, Secret US-Iran talks set stage for nuke deal, November 24, 2013, <http://news.yahoo.com/secret-us-iran-talks-set-stage-nuke-deal-045356533--politics.html> ; Roger Cohen, French Muscle, American Cheese, The New York Times, November 14, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Vive La France on Iran. The French save the West from a very bad nuclear deal with Iran, Wall Street Journal, November 10, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Iranian President Rohani: ,The Geneva Agreement ... Means the Superpower's Surrender To The Great Iranian Nation, MEMRI, Special Dispatch Np. 5601, January 14, 2014.

was not mistaken. Tehran had breached at least six United Nations resolutions and was nevertheless rewarded in Geneva.

### **“Satisfied with Iran becoming Japan”**

This agreement permits the enrichment of uranium below five percent and the research and development of the most modern centrifuges, test runs included. It keeps Iran’s nuclear infrastructure intact and ignores the most pressing demands from the International Atomic Energy Agency, namely, that Iran sign the Additional Protocol of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and allow transparency with respect to its previous nuclear weapons research. The agreement makes it possible for Iran to become a nuclear threshold state and provides legitimacy for its nuclear efforts of the last 30 years.

How can we explain this result? A short look back might help answer this question, for Washington has shifted its policies on Iran time and again.<sup>7</sup>

Initially, President Bill Clinton played an important role in deterring the Iranians by denying them access to any nuclear technology at all. This was a reasonable position. The Non-Proliferation Treaty certainly does not require its members to proliferate nuclear technology to a revolutionary Islamist regime.<sup>8</sup>

In 2006, President George W. Bush jettisoned the Clinton doctrine. His administration accepted the existence of civil nuclear facilities in Iran but ruled out weapons-related technologies such as enrichment. This change, a first for America, came about not in the least as a consequence of Europe’s appeasement vis-à-vis Iran and its stubbornness toward Washington, with Berlin, regrettably, at the forefront.

In 2009, President Barack Obama altered President Bush’s red line and supported a proposal that accepted uranium enrichment up to 5 percent if Iran

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<sup>7</sup> See my article America’s Shifting ‘Red Lines’ on Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions: A Wedge Issue in US-Israeli Relations, *The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* VII:1 (2013), 37-44.

<sup>8</sup> Matthias Küntzel, Iran has no right to nuclear technology, *The Wall Street Journal*, September 29, 2009, also available at <http://www.matthiaskuentzel.de/contents/iran-has-no-right-to-nuclear-technology> .

shipped some of its enriched materials abroad. Tehran promptly began to enrich uranium up to 20 percent.<sup>9</sup>

In 2012, Obama moved his red line even further back. According to then-Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta: “Our red line to Iran is: Do not develop a nuclear weapon.”<sup>10</sup>

But what does Panetta’s demand “do not develop a nuclear weapon” actually mean? In the pages of *The New York Times*, Helene Cooper hinted at what it would be: “Iran would have to become a country like Japan, which has the capability to become an atomic power virtually overnight, if need be, but has rejected taking the final steps to possessing nuclear weapons.” The paper quoted a senior European diplomat: “If you’re asking whether we would be satisfied with Iran becoming Japan, then the answer is a qualified yes. But it would have to be verifiable.”<sup>11</sup>

The comparison with Japan is misleading in two respects. First, it ignores all the factors that make the Iranian nuclear program particularly dangerous. It is true, that Japan could easily become a nuclear power.<sup>12</sup> While no one in Seoul, Manila, or Taipei, however, is particularly worried about Japan’s nuclear potential, the Sunnis of the Persian Gulf region are already more than a little nervous about the Iran’s – as, of course, is Israel.

This analogy is also wrong with regard to technology. There is a widespread assumption “that Iran has the scientific, technical, and industrial capacity to eventually produce nuclear weapons,” as Director of National Intelligence James Clapper put it recently.<sup>13</sup> With that assumption comes the implication

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<sup>9</sup> Matthias Küntzel, Obamas Search for Peace in our Time, Weekly Standard, November 29, 2009, also available at <http://www.matthiaskuentzel.de/contents/obamas-search-for-peace-in-our-time> .

<sup>10</sup> David E. Sanger, Iran Trumpets Nuclear Ability at a Second Location, The New York Times, January 8, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Helene Cooper, Sanctions Against Iran Grow Tighter, but What’s the Next Step? The New York Times, January 24, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Norihiro Kato, Ambiguities of Japan’s Nuclear Policy, The New York Times, April 13, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Wilson, Clapper: Iran Ready for Nuclear Breakout, Commentary, January 29, 2014.

that Iran's political will to build or not to build the weapon is the last thing over which the West might have any leverage.

It is true that Iran could arguably detonate a primitive uranium device even today. Uranium bombs, however, have big disadvantages compared to plutonium bombs: They are five times heavier, i.e., much more difficult to load onto missiles. The United States and the Soviet Union abandoned the uranium route as being too cumbersome and unreliable. China abandoned the uranium track after years of trying as well.<sup>14</sup>

Like every other nuclear power, Iran needs not a maximum but a minimum payload for its ballistic missiles. For that they need a plutonium bomb. As far as we know, the process of creating plutonium is still beyond Iran's capability. That is the reason why progress on the Arak plutonium reactor is the true sand in the hourglass.

The language used by Rouhani and Khamenei to praise their Geneva success was especially revealing. Rouhani wrote in his letter to Khamenei: "Your revolutionary progeny [the nuclear negotiating team] have been able to take the first step in such a way that ... the groundwork has been laid to take further big steps to defend the country's technical ... developments." The term "further big steps" might well refer to the plutonium path. In his response, Khamenei wrote: "The nuclear negotiating team deserves to be treasured and thanked for its achievement, which lays the foundation for the next prudent measure."<sup>15</sup>

Progress on the Arak plutonium reactor could take many forms. There are rumors, for example, that the West might accept a variant of Arak that would reduce the bomb threat at least temporarily by altering the way the reactor would be fuelled.<sup>16</sup> There is no doubt, however, that such change can later be

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<sup>14</sup> Mitch Ginsburg, Israeli expert: Iran already a nuclear power, but can't deliver a bomb, Times of Israel, September 10, 2012, [www.timesofisrael.com/iran-is-already-a-nuclear-power-but-it-cant-deliver-a-bomb-says-one-of-israels-leading-nuclear-experts-dimona-uzi-even/](http://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-is-already-a-nuclear-power-but-it-cant-deliver-a-bomb-says-one-of-israels-leading-nuclear-experts-dimona-uzi-even/).

<sup>15</sup> Exchange of congratulatory messages between Rouhani and Khamenei in light of interim agreement: Khamenei: Iran's enrichment rights were acknowledged, Iran Daily Brief, November 25, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Ali Ahmad, Frank von Hippel, Alexander Glaser, and Zia Mian, A Win-Win Solution for Iran's Arak Reactor, in: Arms Control Today, April 2014.

undone again. Once operational, the Arak reactor – even in its reduced state – could not be destroyed without triggering an environmental catastrophe. International acceptance for the commissioning of Arak with a reduced plutonium output would thus represent a new breakthrough for Tehran.

### **Handling Iran's Breakout Capacity**

The US is, of course, not enamored of the idea of Iran as a nuclear threshold state. Not for nothing has Washington been the hub and enforcer of the global sanctions regime against Tehran. President Obama's overriding concern, however, is to avoid war. The consequence of this decision is to allow the Iranian regime to become a nuclear threshold power as long as it does not actually test a bomb. Obama made this clear in his most recent interview with Jeffrey Goldberg: "[I]f we have any chance to make sure that Iran does not have nuclear weapons, if we have any chance to render their breakout capacity nonexistent, or so minimal that we can handle it, then we've got to pursue that path."<sup>17</sup>

But what does the term "minimal breakout capacity" mean? In April 2014, Secretary of State Kerry used a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing to clarify this notion. "Today, ...we're operating with a time period for a so-called breakout of about two month," he told the senators. "So six month to twelve months is – I'm not saying that's what we'd settle for, but even that is significantly more," Kerry said in response to a question about whether a breakout window of up to a year was the negotiators' goal.<sup>18</sup>

The idea of a breakout window implies, however, that this window is actually open to the outside world . It assumes that Iran's leaders are stupid enough to practice publicly what is forbidden. This assumption is absurd. So far, neither the Security Council resolutions nor global sanctions have been able to induce the regime to ensure nuclear transparency. Moreover, in the Geneva

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<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, Obama to Israel – Time is running out, [www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-03-02/obama-to-israel-time-is-running-out](http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-03-02/obama-to-israel-time-is-running-out), March 2, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Patricia Zengerle, Kerry says Iran nuclear ,breakout' window now seen as two month, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/08/us-iran-nuclear-usa-breakout-idUSBREA3719I20140408> , April 8, 2014.

convention, central claims of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), such as the extension of its inspector's access rights or the disclosure of previous nuclear weapons policies, are not even mentioned. It is obvious that in a territory larger than France, Germany and Poland combined, this nuclear "window" cannot be opened against the will of its leaders. In other words, as long as the Iranian leadership has the technical infrastructure to produce fissile materials for the bomb, it will not hesitate to secretly produce them, if such a decision is made.

Even if we can assume that Washington will be able to learn of Iran's intention to breakout early enough, there is still no guarantee that President Obama would be willing to take the tough decision to mount an assault. Considering the prevailing anti-war atmosphere in America, there is a certain temptation to "overlook" a breakout attempt by the regime and to be "surprised" by the established fact. By then, of course, it will be too late.

It follows, that any attempt to maintain peace requires an unequivocal "no" to Iranian nuclear weapons capability. A deal that promises peace while letting Iran stay poised on the edge of becoming a nuclear power would endanger the world. Nothing, however, will be achieved if Western policymakers and the media continue to yield to the temptation of appeasement.

### **Wishful Thinking and Fear**

Winston Churchill defined appeasement as follows: "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last." The policy of appeasement is thus based on two complementary components: wishful thinking and fear. The more irrational and violent an adversary, the stronger the inclination to appease it. Consequently, in the logic of appeasement, fear and the willingness to engage in dialogue do not contradict, but rather reinforce one another. The main thing is the crocodile: It is a weird and dangerous creature that spreads fear because its behavior is unpredictable.

Ali Khamenei spreads fear. He names Israel "the sinister, unclean, rabid dog in the region" and adds that Israelis "should not be called humans."<sup>19</sup> He sees

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<sup>19</sup> AP and Times of Israel, Iran's 'rabid dog' insults to Israel complicate nuke talks, Times of Israel, November 20, 2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/france-says-iran-comments-on-israel-complicate-nuke-talks/> .

America as an “eternal enemy” and identifies diplomacy as a form of warfare: “Every step, forward and reverse, is similar to a battlefield and must be decided upon in advance in order to achieve the goal.”<sup>20</sup>

The commanders of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards spread fear as well: “We ... have identified centers in America [for attack] that will create a shock. ... We will conduct such a blow in which they [America] will be destroyed from within,” stated one of them in February this year.<sup>21</sup> Western politicians and media are accustomed to totally ignoring such expressions of incitement and aggression.

The example of Iran’s Foreign Minister Zarif is illustrative. He is the superstar of Iran’s charm offensive and able to mesmerize his listeners. Nobody seems to have noticed, however, that Zarif threatens to acquire nuclear weapons: “The only way you can ensure that Iran’s nuclear program remains peaceful is by allowing it to take place in an acceptable, peaceful international environment,” he insisted back in September 2013.<sup>22</sup>

Zarif repeated his threat a number of times. Most of the media, enthralled by Zarif’s smile, his sonorous bass, and his image as an Iranian Gorbachev, ignored his words, although they render null and void the core pronouncement of the Geneva agreement that “Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek or develop any nuclear weapons.”

This, however, exemplifies the second feature of appeasement: ignorance and irrational hope. During the 1930s, “the [British] government ... steadfastly closed their eyes and ears to the disquieting symptoms in Europe,” wrote former Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who was one of the very few British

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Erdbrink, Enigmatic Leader of Iran Backs Overture, for Now, The New York Times, September 23, 2013; Khamenei: I told the negotiating team that the nuclear talks have red lines that must not be crossed, in: Iran Daily Brief, November 20, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Reza Kahlili, Iranian commander: We have targets within America, The Daily Caller, February 1, 2014, <http://dailycaller.com/2014/02/01/iranian-commander-we-have-targets-within-america/>.

<sup>22</sup> M. Javad Zarif interview to Press TV: All options are not on the table; Iran cannot be deprived of its nuclear rights, in: Iran Daily Brief, September 12, 2013.



politicians who had actually read *Mein Kampf*.<sup>23</sup> Churchill drew attention to the Nazis' "philosophy of blood-lust" and the fact that internal conditions in Germany "bore no resemblance to those of a civilized state."<sup>24</sup>

"Only very silly people, of whom there are extremely large numbers in every country, could ignore all this," he stated in his memoirs. He remained, as we know, practically alone in his realistic evaluation of the situation and his ominous warning that war was looming on the horizon.<sup>25</sup> Sadly, today, people seem inclined to repeat yesterday's mistakes.

"I want to reiterate my commitment to a new beginning between America and Muslims around the world", announced President Obama in his Ramadan message of August 2009. "This new beginning must be borne out in a sustained effort to listen to each other and to learn from each other."<sup>26</sup>

There is, however, no "sustained effort to listen" to Islamic leaders such as Ali Khamenei - quite the contrary. Many of the statements issued by the Obama administration suggest that the president and his advisers are not familiar with Islamism at all. Thus, he compared what he called the "resistance" of Hamas with the fight of African-Americans and he blamed the West for creating the tensions that so-called "violent extremists" later exploit.

This understanding, however, is wrong. Iran's rulers do not hate America for what it does. They hate America for what it is. The core of Islamist ideology is to detest the free will of human beings and to accept only the Islamist version of divine law, including the use of whipping and stoning as punishments. Article 2 of Iran's constitution states: "The Islamic republic is a system of government based on the faith in the one God, that he establishes the law, and that man should resign himself to his will."

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<sup>23</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm. The Second World War, Vol. I*, Harmondsworth (Penguin Books Ltd) 1985, p.64.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 77 and 91.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>26</sup> [www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/2009/128227.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/2009/128227.htm).

This constitution has rarely been a topic of debate in the West. Time and again it is this ignorance that has produced irrational hopes. Whenever a new Iranian leader sends out seemingly pragmatic signals, the West tries to convince itself that this is the long-awaited savior who will finally lead the regime onto a non-revolutionary path. In President Reagan's time, that savior was Hashemi Rafsanjani. President Clinton viewed the then-president of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, as the new harbinger of hope. Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, was the first to express regret for the role Washington had played in Iran and was the first to praise Khatami's policies: "The democratic winds in Iran are so refreshing, and many of the ideas espoused by its leaders so encouraging."<sup>27</sup>

How did the Iranian leadership respond to this flattery back in March 2000? Albright's speech did not strengthen Khatami's allies. The very next month, the judiciary, under the control of Supreme Leader Khamenei, started arresting leading journalists and putting them in prison.<sup>28</sup>

### **Humiliating the White House**

This episode demonstrates that our accepted code of dialogue does not apply to the rulers of Iran. Normally, one would expect one's interlocutor to repay generosity in kind. The Iranian regime, however, considers kindness a proof of weakness. Ali Khamenei does not think in terms of "me" *and* "you," but of "me" *or* "you." His president, Hassan Rouhani, does not consider the Geneva Agreement a win-win situation. He sees in it a capitulation of America and a victory for Iran. "The Geneva Agreement means the superpower's surrender to the great Iranian nation," he told the crowd.

There is no question that with this remark, Rouhani wanted to humiliate the United States. It was a public speech. How did the White House react?

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<sup>27</sup> Dore Gold, *The Rise of Nuclear Iran. How Tehran defies the West*, Washington (Regnery Pubs) 2009, p. 146.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

Washington tried to downplay the insult. White House spokesman Jay Carney stated: “It is not surprising to us nor should it be surprising to you that the Iranians are describing the agreement in a certain way toward their domestic audience.”<sup>29</sup> The White House did not object to Rouhani’s remarks. Instead, it safeguarded the Iranian president against his own words. The administration was eager to humbly play down the humiliation so as to save the “dialogue.”

The erroneous belief that Iran has changed its course and that there is nothing to worry about is exactly what many people want to hear. They do not care about Iran’s nuclear ambitions or about the nature of the Iranian regime. They simply want the issue to disappear from the agenda. That is why those who still want to use facts to contest the fictions are heckled.

### **Isolating Israel**

We cannot compare the appeasement of the 1930s with the appeasement of today without highlighting the most important difference. In the ‘30s, heavily armed Czechoslovakia had not chance to defend itself. Its leader, Edward Benes, could not even complain about what Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier did to his country. Israel, by contrast, is in a stronger position and that is precisely why Israel is so sharply attacked today.

The baseless optimism of ordinary citizens, the media, and politicians has established a new axis of symmetry. At its core are those who are leaders depicted as peace seekers: Obama and Rouhani and their supporters. On the margins are to be found the “party poopers,” naggers, and warmongers—in short, the stubborn and even pigheaded elements in both Israel and Iran. Though this image turns reality on its head, it is highly effective as long as the psychology of appeasement influences and even controls people’s minds.

Senator Mark Kirk discovered this mood even in the Senate’s banking committee, where he asked John Kerry about assessments he had received from Israel with regard to the Geneva agreement. The secretary of state,

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<sup>29</sup> Stephen Collinson, White House plays down Rouhani crowing on nuclear deal, [www.rappler.com/world/regions/us-canada/47988-white-house-plays-down-rouhani-crowing-on-nuclear-deal](http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/us-canada/47988-white-house-plays-down-rouhani-crowing-on-nuclear-deal), January 15, 2014.

however, dismissed that source and repeatedly told senators to “disbelieve everything that the Israelis had just told them.”<sup>30</sup>

It was remarkable, as well, how the administration and the media treated the fifty-eight senators supporting the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act—a bill meant to strengthen the American negotiating position vis-à-vis Iran by threatening further sanctions if Tehran violates the Geneva Agreement.

First, the Obama administration fought a fierce battle to convince Senate members not to pass any new measures against Tehran. President Obama repeatedly threatened to use his veto against this bill.<sup>31</sup>

Second, the Senators were accused of secretly working to push the country toward war with Iran. “If certain members of Congress want the United States to take military action, they should be up front with the American public and say so,” requested Bernadette Meehan, the National Security Council spokeswoman.<sup>32</sup>

Third, a campaign against this bill was launched by pro-Iran lobby groups and grassroots organizations such as JStreet, which appealed to the war-weariness of the American population. JStreet stickers bear the slogan: “No Iranian bomb. No new war. No to Senate Bill 1881.”<sup>33</sup> JStreet’s mobilization against a simple sanction law with the slogan “No new war” is reminiscent of the fearful mood prevailing in Europe in the late ’30s.

Fourth, the pernicious accusation of “Jewish activism in Congress” followed. US officials claimed that Obama and Kerry were “disturbed over what is being perceived in their inner circle as ‘Jewish activism in Congress,’” it was

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<sup>30</sup> See note 1.

<sup>31</sup> Mollie Reilly, Obama issues Veto Threat For New Iran Sanctions During Nuclear Deal’s Implementation, in: Huffington Post, January 12, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Ryan Grim, White House Dares Democratic Senators Pushing Iran Sanctions To Admit They Want War, Huffington Post, January 9, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> <https://twitter.com/jstreetdotorg/status/421347216679137281>; the bill’s draft carries the number 1881.

suggested in the *Jerusalem Post*.<sup>34</sup> This complaint—ridiculous as it may seem—was not sent to American Jewish leaders but to the Israeli government. Skeptics of the Geneva Agreement were thus identified as part of "Israel's fifth column" in the US.

Fifth, the entertainment sector also chimed in: In his *Daily Show* broadcast on Comedy Central, Jon Stewart lampooned the fifty-eight senators who advocate a new sanctions bill as being ignorant of the terms of the deal, "and then poled on further by saying the real reason for their doubts about Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal is their loyalty to Israel. He joked that the fifty-eight were acting as senators from 'the great state of Israel' rather than representing American interests."<sup>35</sup>

Another important voice on this is especially worth quoting in this context:

Unfortunately, a pressure group in the US, which is a warmongering group and is against constructive talks, is [pursuing] the interests of a foreign country and mostly receives its orders from that foreign country. ... The interests of one foreign country and one group have been imposed on the members of the US Congress. And we can see that even the interests of the United States are not considered in such actions.<sup>36</sup>

This, however, was the voice of none other than President Rouhani. The transition between a typical antisemitic statement and America's new smearing of Israelis or fellow Americans who are not willing to appease and to falsify reality has been strikingly smooth.

"I witnessed a feature of nuclear war in the Middle East in the future someday that will be part of our children's heritage," claimed Senator Kirk. Was he exaggerating? Perhaps. American pragmatism has often been able to rectify past mistakes.

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<sup>34</sup> US perceives Israel as encouraging anti-Obama backlash among Jews", in: *Jerusalem Post*, January 23, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan S. Tlobin, Why the West Buys Iran's PR Campaign, in: *Commentary*, January 23, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Rouhani: US officials still do not fully grasp the Iran's realities, in: *Iran Daily Brief*, August 9, 2013.

Still, a great debate on principles should take place about Iran becoming a nuclear threshold state. Does Washington really want to prevent this development? The ominous rhetoric emanating from Tehran cannot be ignored. It has to be confronted and repudiated. Finally, Congress should act decisively after the termination of the six-month interim period in July this year. At present, there are many in the world for whom this is their last hope.

If Iran is not exposed for what it really is, the potential for catastrophe will only increase. Nobody knows if a nuclear-armed Iran will allow itself to be disarmed and deprived of its power without using its nukes. Whereas Chamberlain's policy, back in the '30s led to a conventional war, the current policy of the Obama administration conjures up the specter of a nuclear conflict, the consequences of which would be too terrible to imagine.

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