

# American Lack of Purpose Will Lead to a Nuclear Iran

It is probably time for those of us who have strenuously opposed acquiescing in Iran's development of nuclear weapons to throw in the towel. President Obama's determination to transform his and then-secretary of state Hillary Clinton's fervent determination of yesteryear to ensure that no such event occurred into allowing it to occur because a nuclear-capable Iran will revolutionize the international political climate for the better, is inexorable. Obviously, if Mr. Obama's grace of conversion proves to be well founded, all of us who have expressed contrary views, often in trenchant terms, will owe him an apology. And for myself, in that eventuality, I will apologize publicly and unreservedly. Any ability to stop the conveyor belt of concessions to Iran, or even to slow it, has been defeated by the ingenuity of Mr. Obama's systematic promotion of the Iranian interest.

The Russians and Chinese, who, although they have sometimes facilitated Iranian nuclear ambitions, presumably from an addiction to anti-Western mischief-making, should have some concerns, as countries with Muslim minorities, about the principal Muslim rabble-rousing country in the world adding nuclear weapons to its arsenal. But they have been almost completely inert at the seven-power talks that have pursued a negotiated agreement with Iran. The three Western European powers involved, who at times were very feisty and plausible in their professed determination to do their part in preventing a nuclear-armed Iran's coming to pass, especially the French and British, have folded like a trio of three-dollar suitcases. And Mr. Obama's definition of a satisfactory outcome has evolved in less than three years from the complete abandonment of any military aspect of the Iranian nuclear program to an honor-system reliance on the Iranians, very

sketchily verified, that they will not seek to join the nuclear club for ten years, though they have and will retain the unfettered ability to do so in a few months and are permitted explicitly to do so at the end of that time. Between \$30 billion and \$150 billion of blocked Iranian funds will be promptly released from sanctions, and almost the entire trade and financial embargo against Iran from the United Nations and most countries will be abandoned and will be practically impossible to resurrect regardless of provocations.

President Obama is treating the arrangement, in legal terms, as a presidential agreement, like those at Tehran and Yalta that did not require any congressional approval, which may be constitutionally legitimate; and attempts to hinder its operation by the Senate require majorities that are probably unattainable. The whole effort has been further hampered by the Justice Department's coincidentally convenient indictment of the Democratic co-sponsor of a restraining bill – the former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Robert Menendez of New Jersey – on the customary farrago of corruption charges. Almost every aspect of the administration's effort has been shabby: the attempt to portray dissenters as warmongers, putting British prime minister David Cameron up to telephoning senators asking for their votes, staging the telefarce with the *New York Times's* Tom Friedman that this and the preemptive concessions to the Castro regime constitute a portentous "doctrine" of foreign-policy technique.

In about equal measure, it must be admitted that the Iranians have played their hand brilliantly; they have outmaneuvered and discredited the traditional Great Powers, and reduced them, in Nixonesque, to "pitiful helpless giants." They have struck a mighty and bloodless blow for militant Islam and their clear passage into a glide path to being a nuclear power, even if the Iranian leaders elect to take the full decade to get there, will alter the correlation of forces in

the world and show that, after the Iraq and Afghanistan war fiascoes co-authored by George W. Bush and Barack Obama, there are no remaining Great Powers in the world and even the strongest countries have no stomach for anything more than self-defense, if that. It is a cowardly, or at the very best, a timid new world.

We will all pad somnolently through the 19 months to next inauguration day, when any of the prominent Republicans or Hillary Clinton will take the presidential oath with a more purposeful and presumably more precise definition of America's place in the world than the whimsical, capricious, and feckless dilettantism that has afflicted American foreign policy and accelerated the dilution of the foreign policy of its nominal allies in the last 15 years. All that is really required, and has been required these many years, is a clear definition of the national-security interests of the United States, as serious presidents or their authorized spokesmen have usefully provided from time to time – from Franklin D. Roosevelt in hemispheric matters while in Canada in 1938 and to support the war effort of the democracies in 1940 and 1941; to Harry S Truman, George C. Marshall, and Dean Acheson, in aiding Greece and Turkey, ordering the Berlin Airlift, giving Marshall Plan assistance to Western Europe, setting up NATO, and defending South Korea (though Acheson notoriously omitted mention of this country in a seminal speech to the National Press Club in 1950); through Dwight D. Eisenhower in the Formosa Resolution, John F. Kennedy over nuclear missiles in Cuba, Lyndon Johnson on South Vietnam, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in a broad redefinition to allow for improving relations with China and the USSR, and Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush in bringing the Cold War to a very satisfactory end and emerging from it.

The preoccupation of George W. Bush with democracy led to the triumph of undemocratic movements by democratic means, in Gaza, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iraq, and President Obama has

attempted no definition at all of the American national-security interest, returning us, in this one respect only, to the era of Calvin Coolidge. (Even Herbert Hoover managed the Stimson Doctrine of non-recognition of territorial expansion by illegitimate force, which drove Japan out of the League of Nations over its seizure of Manchuria.) Distinguished former Canadian diplomat Derek Burney recently spoke for many veterans of the Western Alliance in its prime, and spoke nothing but the truth, in saying that "hastily cobbled together coalitions under irresolute U.S. leadership are proving to be insufficient."

No reasonable foreigner can dispute the right or even the wisdom of the Americans in no longer wishing to be the world's policeman, or even the world's air-raid warden. Apart from humanitarian factors, there is no reason that Americans should care about or play any part in these frequent smash-ups of illogically conceived countries, usually patched together in European chancelleries in the 19th or early 20th century with no thought to ethnic or tribal facts on the ground. But Franklin D. Roosevelt determined, and the consensus to support his policy is almost certainly still in place, that the United States should support indigenous forces to prevent totalitarian enemies of America from securing control of Western Europe or the Far East. The terrible abuse by many of America's Cold War allies of the risk-sharing and burden-sharing confidence trick that enabled the European countries to claim that somehow the fact that they were at direct risk from the Soviet Union meant that the U.S. could pay the price of protecting them led to a more supine, flaccid, contemptibly impotent Western Europe today than almost anyone imagined possible, so soon after the vigorous nationalism of Charles de Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher.

The Indians, Japanese, Indonesians, Vietnamese, South Koreans, Filipinos, Thais, Australians, and New Zealanders will not need much encouragement from the U.S. (and surely by now don't

expect much) to resist the almost Kaiser Wilhelm bully-boy schoolyard antics of China. As soon as his currency recovers from the hammering the Saudis gave it by tanking the oil price (when they were aiming at Iran and not Russia), Vladimir Putin will presumably expose NATO as the farce it has become by promoting the agitation of ethnic Russians in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. It is unlikely that the NATO formula of "An attack upon one is an attack upon all" will be held to apply (as it did after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington) to those little countries that Russia has ruled for most of the last 300 years?. As a die-hard supporter of the Western Alliance concept, who always pauses on the June 6 anniversary of D-Day to recite from memory Roosevelt's brief address on that day concluding that the valor of America's sons, "pride of our nation," and its allies would produce "a peace invulnerable to the schemings of unworthy men," I dare to hope (prayerfully) that Ukraine survives the venomous arachnoid depredations of Putin long enough for a new U.S. president to put something bracing up the backbone of the Germans. Chancellor Merkel, despite her feeble and schizoid coalition partner (the SPD), has had every opportunity to be Bismarck in drag and lead Germany back, after a lapse of 125 years, to filling responsibly the role of Europe's greatest power. She has refused military aid to Ukraine, done nothing to reduce German dependence on Russian natural gas, and failed to prevent Germany's drift toward a mindless, delusional pacifism. The eminent novelist Günter Grass, Waffen SS veteran and long-time pacifist, has died, but his confused spirit is in the ascendant.

Even in the Middle East, and even after the diplomatic triumph of the Iranian theocrats, the evaporation of outside influences is having a somewhat salutary effect on the local regimes that are still functioning throughout the borders their former colonial masters assigned them. The Iranians will presumably not rush to nuclear saber-rattling capability: They would try rather to avoid a Saudi-Egyptian importuning of

Israel to strike at Iran's nuclear capacity, to avoid promoting the election of a purposeful foreign-policy president in the U.S., to confirm the wisdom of the servile appeasement by the six major powers who were co-signatories of the Iranian nuclear agreement, and even to try to forestall a rush to nuclear arms by the Saudis, Egyptians, and Turks (Pakistan would love to sell them the technology, but Egypt, especially, would find it an onerous expense).

And the forces of moderation, beleaguered though they are in that region, have gained some ground. Turkey's egregious President Erdogan has taken a good slap in the mouth from his voters: The Kurds hold the legislative balance of power, and the Kemalists and Nationalists came in almost even with Erdogan's party in the legislative elections. His capacity to destabilize the region with his posturings from his ungainly \$700 million palace should be appreciably reduced. Amnesty International, in a virtual Damascene act of conversion, has condemned Hamas, which may mean that the tired and senile leopard of the international Left will be less of a nuisance on Israel's back than it has been. And, it must be said, President Obama's endorsement of the two-state solution in his interview with Al Arabiya was moderate and sensible.

The imminent success of Iran will change the world for the worse. But stones still fall downwards, shrimps don't sing, pigs don't fly, the sun still rises each day, and a little leadership in high places would uplift the weary and slake the parched throats of a world that has been, in de Gaulle's phrase, "crossing the desert."

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