

The Curious Case of Rob Malley



Peter Schweizer writes at the [Gatestone Institute](#):

Hamas's war against Israel, coordinated with Iran, has exposed the fault lines in the American Left.

While mainstream Democratic liberals have sided with the innocent Israelis massacred by Hamas terrorists, leftist "Squad" members in Congress compete with Ivy League campus radicals to outdo one another by championing the vicious murderers as a "resistance."

Anti-Israel sentiment has been oozing through those cracks on the Left for years, but the presidency of Barack Obama certainly primed the pump. Obama's choice of advisors reflected his deep distrust of Israel and penchant for

supporting Palestinians and appeasing Iran. One of those advisor choices, the now-disgraced Robert Malley, is a case-in-point.

This summer, Malley was placed on unpaid leave from the State Department and had his security clearance revoked after an internal investigation found he had “mishandled classified information.”

Malley’s case is evidently serious enough that he is also now under investigation by the FBI, which would appear to suggest potential criminal charges of bribery or possibly even espionage.

Republicans on the House Oversight Committee are now preparing to subpoena Malley and the State Department for documents pertaining to his suspension, a situation that some observers say is among the worst scandals in the department’s history. Due to Iran’s involvement in the Hamas invasion of Israel, they are scrutinizing Malley’s role in negotiating the Biden administration’s September agreement that released \$6 billion of frozen Iranian oil revenues to Tehran as part of a broader prisoner-swap agreement. Under political pressure after Hamas’s jihadist pogrom in southern Israel, the Biden administration reluctantly agreed to refreeze those funds.

More bad news for Malley emerged recently when a large cache of Iranian government correspondence and emails was revealed by Semafor and Iran International. In email exchanges between Iranian Foreign Ministry officials working under the supposedly moderate then President Hassan Rouhani, they congratulate each other for the public success of what they called the “Iran Experts Initiative (IEI),” a propaganda effort they created back in 2014, and reportedly “funded and directed by an IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] official named Mostafa Zahrani. Zahrani was the point of contact between IEI members and Javad Zarif, then Iran’s foreign minister.” The IEI cultivated a network of sympathetic

academics and intellectuals “with the aim of shaping political and public opinion as the Iranian government, then led by Hassan Rouhani, pursued a nuclear deal with the U.S.”

At least two of the people on the Foreign Ministry’s list were, or became, top aides to Malley, while a third was hired by the think tank Malley ran before re-joining the State Department.

Malley’s well known pro-Iran sympathies made him a target of Republicans outraged by the Iran nuclear deal.

Gabriel Noronha, who formerly served as a special adviser on Iran at the State Department under Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, charged that while Malley worked for President Biden as his envoy to Iran, he and his negotiating team “purposefully funneled billions of dollars to [Iran] through lack of sanctions enforcement and provision of sanctions relief that has given them somewhere between \$50 [billion] and \$80 billion over the last two and a half years.”

“Rob Malley deserves extensive scrutiny—yesterday, today and tomorrow,” Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) told reporters recently after news broke that officers of Iran’s IRGC planned and signed off on the massacre committed by Hamas terrorists from Gaza against Israel. “These reports,” he added, “could not be more concerning, and they hint at what could be the worst State Department scandal since Alger Hiss.”

Other former officials [told](#) The Daily Caller that Malley and a previous advisor of his, Ariane Tabatabai, who holds a senior, security clearance level job at the Defense Department, are “compromised” and had no place running Washington’s Iran policy. Tabatabai is still employed at the Pentagon where, [noted](#) the investigative reporter Lee Smith, “she has been serving as chief of staff for the assistant secretary of defense for special operations, Christopher Maier.”

“Tabatabai’s emails show her enthusiastically submitting to the control of top Iranian officials, who then guided her

efforts to propagandize and collect intelligence on U.S. and allied officials in order to advance the interests of the Islamic Republic.”

Smith also wrote:

“The contents of the emails are damning, showing a group of Iranian American academics being recruited by the Iranian regime, meeting together in foreign countries to receive instructions from top regime officials, and pledging their personal loyalty to the regime”

Most recently, a report delivered to the White House charges that Tabatabai and other members of the IEI were also engaged in a “covert campaign” to smear Iran’s leading opposition group, known as the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK). [According](#) to Ivan Sascha Sheehan, an associate dean of the University of Baltimore’s College of Public Affairs:

“By seeking to neutralize favorable impressions of the organization among Washington’s foreign policy elite, Tehran sought to take down an entity capable of aiding Western attempts to curtail the Iranian regime’s nuclear weapons program, malign regional agenda, human rights abuses, and fundamentalist inclinations.” [The MEK is a Marxist/Islamist organization and should not be supported either. – RB]

Tabatabai still has high-level security clearance and access to classified information. The FBI has reportedly “refused to remove her.” So, while Israel fights for its existence, a genocidal Iran is using three of its proxies— Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis in Yemen—Tabatabai, who according to Rep. Brian Mast (R-Fla.), “had the mission of influencing U.S. policymakers to agree with what the Iranian government wanted,” may be sending classified information about planned U.S. and Israeli military moves back to Iran.

A spokesman for the Department of Defense [told](#) the Washington Free Beacon, “We are honored to have her serve.” What could possibly go wrong?

Regarding Iran in particular, it would be hard to name someone who has been as relentlessly influential in the left wing's foreign policy sphere as Malley. A longtime friend of Secretary of State Antony Blinken—they attended the École Jeannine Manuel in Paris together—Malley served under the presidencies of both Bill Clinton and his college friend Barack Obama before being named as President Joe Biden's official envoy to Iran.

Under Clinton, Malley was a Special Assistant for Arab-Israeli Affairs, where he oversaw the Camp David negotiations between Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) head Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. He sat out the Republican administration of George W. Bush and worked for the George Soros-funded International Crisis Group, where he continued to advocate for radical shifts in foreign policies. In 2008, when Obama ran for president, he tapped Malley, his friend and former Harvard classmate, to serve as his campaign advisor for Middle East foreign policy—until Malley was forced to resign in May 2008, after it was reported that he was in close communication with members of Hamas.

Malley, however, returned again in 2014, first as senior director of the National Security Council, then soon becoming Obama's Special Assistant for Middle East policy. Sure enough, it was Malley who oversaw Obama's 2015 "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, known colloquially as the "Iran nuclear deal," over the objections of its regional allies, including Israel.

It was no surprise, therefore, when the incoming Biden administration tapped Malley to be its official envoy to Iran as part of its aborted attempt to resurrect Obama's Iran deal. It had been rejected at the time by the Senate and was discarded completely by the Trump administration. Now finally, Malley himself is being discarded.

The puzzling thing is that throughout his career, Malley has been so pro-Iran, so pro-Hamas, and so anti-Israel that the

wonder is: "Why is this just now becoming news?"

Malley has been consistent in supporting America's Middle East adversaries throughout his government and think tank service.

Malley's life story makes it clear enough. His mother was a New Yorker who worked for the Algerian National Liberation Front at the U.N.; his father Simon Malley was an Egyptian-born member of the communist party, and an Arab nationalist who worked in the 1950s for Egypt's notoriously anti-Semitic President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Simon Malley left Egypt to continue life as a Marxist intellectual in Paris, where his prolific writing championed the same Third World-focused, anti-imperialist, anti-American Marxist worldview that has since consumed many of America's college campuses. The Malley family would later be expelled from France to the U.S. in 1980 because of Simon's hostility to French policies in Africa.

"As his father was logging in an impressive 20-hour interview with Fidel Castro and many more hours with Yasir Arafat, Robert Malley's childhood was a cosmopolitan, internationalist, and Third Worldist one that exposed him from an early age to a vast world of anti-imperialist passions and revolutionary intrigue," [noted](#) the writer Hussein Aboubakr Mansour in a recent profile of Malley. Mansour is an Egyptian-born former jihadi who later renounced his past and became a supporter of the United States and Israel.

Mansour's use of the term "cosmopolitan" here hits on a core tenet of New Left ideology, where concern for one's own country is seen as jingoism, and the welfare of other nations, even those openly hostile to the U.S., occupies the highest priority.

Young Robert Malley apparently absorbed his father's politics and hatred of Israel so thoroughly that he was writing anti-Zionist op-eds for the Yale Daily News just a month into his freshman year. Throughout his later career in various political offices or writing for left-wing think tanks, Malley has consistently voiced support for the Iranian regime and for

radical foreign policy ideas, along the way amassing an army of critics on the political right, who are now challenging not just his ideas and influence, but even his loyalty to the United States.

With this background, the wonder is that he has come this far. His status as a senior policy expert on Iran, at least within left-wing Democratic Party circles, might strike one as astounding. If we assume the worst conclusion to the ongoing FBI investigation, Malley, while serving as the Biden administration's emissary to Iran, committed espionage by giving U.S. secret information to the Iranian regime, just as his protégé Tabatabai might still be doing. How was her "top level security clearance" approved and why is she still employed in a senior position at the Pentagon?

If anything, Issa's conjuring up the ghost of Alger Hiss misses a critical distinction. Hiss was outwardly an American patriot, the son of a privileged background who became a Soviet spy and passed secrets to the KGB, all while appearing to work diligently for the U.S. State Department. Hiss acted as though he were above such suspicions.

Malley, on the other hand, has made no bones about his pro-Tehran leanings, ever. In fact, he has been completely open about it for decades. Which conclusion, I wonder, would be more surprising? That Rob Malley has been passing secrets to the hated Iranian mullahs, or that he has not been?

The path from the clandestine treason of Alger Hiss to the case of Robert Malley indicates a deeper rot in our politics. Both Hiss and Malley were Harvard-educated foreign policy professionals, yet Hiss's status as a member of the Ivy League elite was used as his strongest defense against the espionage charges leveled against him. In Malley's case, however, his pro-Iranian sympathy is these days the very epitome of the mindset at schools such as Harvard, thanks to the triumph of the Left's "long march" through academia.

Malley had no need to hide what he really thought. His stances are interchangeable with any number of left-wing foreign policy intellectuals who are right now teaching students at those same schools. Malley is nothing like the sneaky Hiss. He is far closer to those Ivy League professors currently tweeting gleefully in favor of the terrorist group Hamas, just to cite the most current example.

Following the end of the Cold War, “anti-imperialist” left-wing radicals such as Malley came to terms with and were able to influence liberals with whom they had previously battled. In his recent [article](#), Mansour summed up this metamorphosis: “In this context, one could see Malley’s conversion to American liberalism, his joining of the bureaucratic ranks of what he once considered ‘American imperialism’ was part of a larger phenomenon in which the Western leftwing anti-imperialist intelligentsia was fragmented between those who formed anti-globalization, anti-war, and environmentalist movements and those who merged with the liberal establishment and shaped its progressive wing. Like Obama himself, they were a new American class of international, urban, highly mobile, and highly credentialed professional intellectuals who came to age in the Edward Said moment. They are both comfortable in the professional corporate world and the activist world and both at home in Western and non-Western countries. They no longer believed in what Foucault propagandized as the spiritual humanism of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, nor in the inevitable world-transforming triumph of Palestinian guerrillas. They no longer believed in the conspiratorial villainy of American imperialism, but neither did they believe in American patriotism. Unlike what hot-headed and ill-tempered American conservative populists say, they do not hate America, and they do not work for America’s enemies, but they are merely ambivalent to what we think America represents.”

Worth noting is that this assessment was written in July, before the news about Malley’s involvement and the Iranian Foreign Ministry’s control of the “Iran Experts Initiative”

came to light.

It is a wonder Malley ever passed a background check in the first place.