

OBAMA'S NUCLEAR DEAL, THREATENING ISRAEL & ARAB ALLIES, CLAIMS TO TURN IRANIAN ENEMIES INTO FRIENDS

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A BLUEPRINT FOR FAILURE

Gabriel Scheinmann

[*Weekly Standard*, Mar. 23, 2015](#)

A half-century of estrangement is over, President Obama declared late last year, in a surprise announcement that he was transforming U.S. policy towards Cuba. Having broken the ice, the administration hopes that normalizing diplomatic relations and lifting the economic embargo will, as the recently released National Security Strategy explains, “enhance our engagement in our own hemisphere, where there are enormous opportunities to consolidate gains in pursuit of peace, prosperity, democracy, and energy security.” Actually, it’s a geopolitically insignificant decision—except for the pattern it continues, one we would do well to recall as the deadline for a deal with Iran looms.

Obama’s approach to the world can be summed up with the title of a single book: *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace*. Influential Georgetown professor Charles Kupchan published it in 2010 and now serves the president as senior director for European affairs on the National Security Council (on which he also served during the Clinton administration). Contravening conventional wisdom, Kupchan argues that “deft diplomacy, not trade or investment, is the critical ingredient needed to set enemies on the pathway to peace.” The Russian reset, the two-plus years of nuclear negotiations with Iran, the 18 months of secret talks with Cuba: The administration clearly agrees that diplomacy, not shared interests or values, can overcome longstanding barriers.

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~~Kupchan outlines a four-step transformation sequence to turn enemies into~~ friends, one the White House has followed to a tee: unilateral accommodation, reciprocal restraint, societal integration, and the generation of new narratives and identities. States remove a threat by “exercising strategic restraint and making concessions to an adversary” as a way to signal benign intent. To indicate the seriousness of the gesture, the concession needs to be “unusual and costly,” such as “backing down on a border dispute or unilaterally withdrawing forces from a contested area.”

Evidence of the Kupchan approach is ubiquitous. Towards Russia, the unilateral accommodation included accepting Russia's occupation of Georgian territory, giving up American missile defense plans in Eastern Europe, and agreeing to a massive reduction in America's nuclear arsenal. For Iran, it involved removing the credible threat of U.S. military force and recognizing Iran's right to enrich uranium despite U.N. Security Council resolutions and regular Iranian perfidy. With Cuba, Obama is using his executive powers to normalize relations and weaken the embargo as much as he can but not requiring an end to repression there.

Kupchan's book does not seem to have been translated into other languages because none of America's adversaries has taken step two, reciprocal restraint. China continues to bully its neighbors, Russia has invaded Ukraine and backstopped Bashar al-Assad's regime, which in turn has murdered 200,000 people, and Iran, while cheating on its interim nuclear commitments, now boasts of controlling four Arab capitals, Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, and Sanaa. This uncooperative behavior has not led the administration to rethink its approach of treating enemies as friends. America finds itself partnering with China, Russia, Syria, and Iran to solve problems those countries themselves have caused.

Putting Kupchan's theory into practice was bound to fail. He points to the Iroquois Confederation, the Anglo-American rapprochement, the European Union security community, and the Swiss Confederation as his successful cases. Such transformations, Kupchan writes, can only occur when three conditions exist between the two parties: institutionalized restraint, compatible social orders, and

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cultural commonality. Vladimir Putin's Russia, Xi Jinping's China, Assad's Syria, the mullahs' Iran, and the Castros' Cuba hardly fit the bill.

The White House does not seem to believe its strategy comes with costs. As Obama said about America's Cuba policy, "these 50 years have shown that isolation has not worked. It's time for a new approach." But the Kupchan approach has done real damage. Not only have the administration's unilateral accommodations encouraged additional bad behavior, they have also caused huge rifts with allies caught in the crosshairs. Obama's weak response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine led Poland's then-foreign minister to bemoan that the "Polish-U.S. alliance isn't worth anything." Similarly, the administration has infuriated Saudi Arabia with a series of decisions, from the chemical weapons red-line climb-down in Syria, to the suspension of military aid to Egypt, to the unveiling of the interim nuclear deal with Iran—all of which the Saudis reportedly learned from CNN.

Which brings us to the public spectacle that is Obama's relationship with Benjamin Netanyahu. With Cuba as yet another example, the Israeli prime minister's ultimate fear is that Obama is willing to sign any nuclear deal with Iran—no matter what it entails—because any deal will set the U.S.-Iranian relationship on a transformative path. Recognizing and legitimizing an Iranian nuclear capability is precisely the sort of "unusual and costly" concession Kupchan says is necessary to turn an enemy into a friend. Israel isn't just worried the pending deal will do little to halt Iranian nuclear plans; it could be the conduit through which the United States begins to treat Iran as a regional partner rather than its supreme regional adversary.

As with the president's other olive branches, the attempt to transform Iran from an enemy to a friend will likely fail. We've seen no evidence of forthcoming reciprocal restraint from the mullahs. Continued Iranian support for murderous actors such as Assad and Hezbollah or persistent violations of nuclear commitments could well force this administration, or the next one, to reverse course. When that happens, however, we will not be able to return to the status

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quo ante. Allies, such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, will have made their own choices in the interim about how to secure their interests, which now stand in opposition to the budding U.S.-Iranian concert. Netanyahu's speech made this clear. One can easily imagine a situation in which Israel and Sunni states decide to take on Hezbollah and Assad directly, only to be opposed jointly by Washington and Tehran. Not only will the United States have failed in turning enemies into friends, but it will have lost friends in the process.

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IRAN'S PERSIAN STATEMENT ON 'DEAL' CONTRADICTS OBAMA'S CLAIMS

Amir Taheri

[New York Post](#), Apr. 4, 2015

"Iran Agrees to Detailed Nuclear Outline," *The New York Times* headline claimed on Friday. That found an echo in the *Washington Post* headline of the same day: "Iran agrees to nuclear restrictions in framework deal with world powers." But the first thing to know about the highly hyped "historic achievement" that President Obama is trying to sell is that there has been no agreement on any of the fundamental issues that led to international concern about Iran's secret nuclear activities and led to six mandatory resolutions by the United Nations Security Council and 13 years of diplomatic seesaw.

All we have is a number of contradictory statements by various participants in the latest round of talks in Switzerland, which together amount to a diplomatic dog's dinner. First, we have a joint statement in English in 291 words by Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif and the European Union foreign policy point-woman Federica Mogherini, who led the so-called P5+1 group of nations including the US in the negotiations. Next we have the official Iranian text, in Persian, which runs into 512 words. The text put out by the French comes with 231 words. The

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prize for “spinner-in-chief” goes to US Secretary of State John Kerry who has put out a text in 1,318 words and acts as if we have a done deal.

It is not only in their length that the texts differ. They amount to different, at times starkly contradictory, narratives. The Mogherini and French texts are vague enough to be ultimately meaningless, even as spin. The Persian text carefully avoids words that might give the impression that anything has been agreed by the Iranian side or that the Islamic Republic has offered any concessions. The Iranian text is labelled as a press statement only. The American text, however, pretends to enumerate “Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action” and claims key points have been “decided.” What remains to be done is work out “implementation details.” When referring to what Iran is supposed to do, the Iranian text uses a device of Persian grammar known as “*nakarah*,” a form of verbs in which the authorship of a deed remains open to speculation. For example: “It then happened that . . .” or “that is to be done.”

But when it comes to things the US and allies are supposed to do, the grammatical form used is “*maerfah*” which means the precise identification of the author. This is an example of the first form: “The nuclear facilities at Fordow shall be developed into a center for nuclear research and advanced Physics.” It is not clear who is going to do those things, over what length of time, and whether that would be subject to any international supervision. An example of the second form: “The United Nations shall abrogate its previous resolutions while the United States and the European Union will immediately lift sanctions [imposed on] financial, banking, insurance, investment and all services related to oil, gas, petrochemicals and car industry.”

The Iranian text opens by insisting that it has absolutely no “legal aspect” and is intended only as “a guideline for drafting future accords.” The American text claims that Iran has agreed to do this or that, for example reducing the number of centrifuges from 19,000 to 6,500. The Iranian text, however, says that Iran “shall be able to . . .” or “*qader khahad boud*” in Farsi to do such a thing. The same is true about enrichment in Fordow. The Americans say Iran has agreed to stop

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enrichment there for 15 years. The Iranian text, however, refers to this as something that Iran “will be able to do,” if it so wished.

Sometimes the two texts are diametrically opposed. The American statement claims that Iran has agreed not to use advanced centrifuges, each of which could do the work of 10 old ones. The Iranian text, however, insists that “on the basis of solutions found, work on advanced centrifuges shall continue on the basis of a 10-year plan.” The American text claims that Iran has agreed to dismantle the core of the heavy water plutonium plant in Arak. The Iranian text says the opposite. The plant shall remain and be updated and modernized.

In the past two days Kerry and Obama and their apologists have been all over the place claiming that the Iranian nuclear project and its military-industrial offshoots would be put under a kind of international tutelage for 10, 15 or even 25 years. However, the Persian, Italian and French texts contain no such figures. The US talks of sanctions “relief” while Iran claims the sanctions would be “immediately terminated.” The American text claims Tehran has agreed to take measures to reassure the international community on military aspects of its nuclear project, an oblique reference to Iran’s development, with help from North Korea, of missiles designed to carry nuclear warheads. There is absolutely no echo of that in the Iranian and other non-American texts.

In his jubilatory remarks in the Rose Garden Thursday, Obama tried to sell the Americans a bill of goods. He made three outrageous claims. The first was that when he became president Iran had “thousands of centrifuges” which would now be cut down to around 6,000. In fact, in 2008, Iran had only 800 centrifuges. It was on Obama’s watch and because of his perceived weakness that Iran speeded up its nuclear program. The second claim was that thanks to the scheme he is peddling “all of Iran’s paths” to developing a nuclear arsenal would be blocked. And, yet, in the same remarks he admitted that even if the claimed deal is fully implemented, Iran would still be able to build a bomb in just a year, presumably jumping over the “blocked paths.”

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Obama's worst claim was that the only alternative to his attempts at surrendering to the obnoxious Khomeinist regime would be US involvement in "another ground war in the Middle East." He ignores the fact that forcing Iran through diplomatic action, sanctions and proximity pressures to abide by six UN resolutions could also be regarded as an alternative. In other words, preemptive surrender is not the only alternative to war...

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THE IRAN DEAL AND HOW NOT TO BUY A MIDDLE EASTERN CARPET

Michael B. Oren

[Time](#), Apr. 3, 2015

Want to purchase a carpet in the Middle East? If so, the first question the merchant will ask you is, "How much do you want to spend?" Seasoned buyers never answer. They know that whatever amount they cite will become the baseline for the negotiation. They understand that the merchant's smiles, the many cups of tea he serves, his invitations to stroll along the riverbank, are all part of his selling tactic. So, too, are his protests — in response to any offer — of wounded pride. Veterans of Middle East carpet markets expect the give-and-take to be lengthy, even exhausting, but are always willing to leave the shop.

The parameters agreement for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran is an ideal example of how not to buy a Middle Eastern carpet. In 2012, President Barack Obama declared that, "The deal we'll accept is that they end their nuclear

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program” and “~~abide by the UN resolutions~~” demanding that Iran cease all uranium enrichment and dismantle its nuclear plants. The Security Council’s five permanent members plus Germany could have offered the lowest possible price as their final bid – take it or leave it. Iran would have had little choice but to sell the carpet.

Yet, in reaching the parameters agreement, international negotiators were worn down by the protracted talks. They were persuaded by Iran’s displays of warmth and earnestness, and accepted its claim that the nuclear program was a matter of national pride similar to America’s moon landing. Most damagingly, when asked by the Iranians “how much do you want to spend?” the P5+1 replied by recognizing the Islamic Republic’s right to enrich and to maintain its nuclear facilities. This became the new baseline and the only remaining questions were: How much enrichment and how many facilities? The haggling had scarcely begun and already the merchant profited.

At this point, the only advantage the customer retains is the ability to stop bargaining. This is what Ronald Reagan did at the 1986 Reykjavik summit and later obtained significant Soviet concessions. But, despite repeated White House warnings that “Iran’s window to obtain a peaceful resolution will not remain open forever,” the window never closed. Nor did the Iranians ever believe it would or that they have to pay a price for keeping it open. Instead of telling the Iranians that “if you don’t take this offer, our next one will be smaller,” the P5+1 said, “If you don’t like these terms, perhaps we can improve them.” Rather than responding to Iranian intransigence with heightened sanctions and credible military force, negotiators removed these options. Experienced carpet buyers know when to walk away and let the merchant come chasing after them. But, in reaching the parameters agreement, it was the Iranians, rather than the P5+1, who always threatened to bolt. The customers begged the merchant to stay.

The Middle Eastern form of negotiating, perfected over thousands of years, should no longer be alien to Westerners. The Palestinians have employed it repeatedly, starting each round of peace talks with “how much are you willing to spend?” If

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the answer is a Palestinian state based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps and its capital in East Jerusalem, be assured that this will be their new opening position. The Palestinians — not the Israelis — keep walking away from the table, each time pocketing their newly-obtained concessions. Nobody should be surprised, when discussions on a final nuclear agreement begin, Iranian delegates treat the parameters agreement as the baseline for garnering an even better price.

To prevent that, the United States and its P5+1 partners must reject any further Iranian demands. They should make clear to Tehran that it risks losing the gains it has made while facing punitive measures such as ramped-up sanctions. They must be prepared to walk away. At the same time, effective mechanisms must be put into place for rapidly responding to Iranian violations. The world must provide for the possibility that the treaty — like the carpet — will fall apart...

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THE SHADOW OF MUNICH HAUNTS THE IRAN NEGOTIATIONS

Victor Davis Hanson

[National Review](#), Apr. 2, 2015T

Western capitulation to Adolf Hitler in the 1938 Munich Agreement is cited as classic appeasement that destroyed Czechoslovakia, backfired on France and Britain, and led to World War II. All of that is true. But there was much more that caused the Munich debacle than simple Western naiveté. The full tragedy of that ill-fated agreement should warn us on the eve of the Obama's administration's gullible agreement with Iran on nuclear proliferation. Fable one is the idea that

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most people saw right through the Munich folly. True, Europeans knew that Hitler had never once told the truth and was already murdering German citizens who were Jews, Communists, or homosexuals. But Europeans did not care all that much.

Instead, the Western world was ecstatic over the agreement. After the carnage of World War I, Europeans would do anything to avoid even a small confrontation — even if such appeasement all but ensured a far greater bloodbath than the one that began in 1914. Another myth was that Hitler's Wehrmacht was strong and the democracies were weak. In fact, the combined French and British militaries were far larger than Hitler's. French Char tanks and British Spitfire fighters were as good as, or superior to, their German counterparts.

Czechoslovakia had formidable defenses and an impressive arms industry. Poland and perhaps even the Soviet Union were ready to join a coalition to stop Hitler from dissolving the Czech state. It is also untrue that the Third Reich was united. Many of Hitler's top generals did not want war. Yet each time Hitler successfully called the Allies' bluff — in the Rhineland or with the annexation of Austria — the credibility of his doubters sank while his own reckless risk-taking became even more popular. Munich was hardly a compassionate agreement. In callous fashion it immediately doomed millions of Czechs and put Poland on the target list of the Third Reich.

Munich was directly tied to the vanity of Neville Chamberlain. In the first few weeks after Munich, Chamberlain basked in adulation, posing as the humane savior of Western civilization. In contrast, loud skeptic Winston Churchill was dismissed by the media and public as an old warmonger. Hitler failed to appreciate the magnanimity and concessions of the French and British. He later called his Munich diplomatic partners "worms." Hitler said of the obsequious Chamberlain, "I'll kick him downstairs and jump on his stomach in front of the photographers."

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The current negotiations with the Iranians in Lausanne, Switzerland, have all the hallmarks of the Munich negotiations. More Iran Benghazi, Bergdahl, and the Bomb Night Thoughts on Obama and Iran How Far Will Iran Go in Its Pursuit of Conquest and Empire? Most Westerners accept that the Iranian government funds terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. It has all but taken over Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Yet the idea of stronger sanctions, blockades, or even force to stop Iranian efforts to get a bomb are considered scarier than Iran getting a bomb that it just possibly might not threaten to use.

The U.S. and its NATO partners are far stronger than Iran in every imaginable measure of military and economic strength. The Iranian economy is struggling, its government is corrupt, and its conventional military is obsolete. Iran's only chance of gaining strength is to show both its own population and the world at large that stronger Western powers backed down in fear of its threats and recklessness. Iran is not united. It is a mishmash nation in which over a third of the population is not Persian. Millions of protestors hit the streets in 2009. An Iranian journalist covering the talks defected in Switzerland — and said that U.S. officials at the talks are there mainly to speak on behalf of Iran. By reaching an agreement with Iran, John Kerry and Barack Obama hope to salvage some sort of legacy — in the vain fashion of Chamberlain — out of a heretofore failed foreign policy.

There are more Munich parallels. The Iranian agreement will force rich Sunni nations to get their own bombs to ensure a nuclear Middle East standoff. A deal with Iran shows callous disregard for our close ally Israel, which is serially threatened by Iran's mullahs. The United States is distant from Iran. But our allies in the Middle East and Europe are within its missile range. Supporters of the Obama administration deride skeptics such as Democratic senator Robert Menendez and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu as if they were doubting old Churchills.

Finally, the Iranians, like Hitler, have only contempt for the administration that has treated them so fawningly. During the negotiations in Switzerland, the Iranians blew up a mock U.S. aircraft carrier. Their supreme leader, Ayatollah

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Khamenei, did his usual “death to America” shtick before adoring crowds. Our dishonor in Lausanne, as with Munich, may avoid a confrontation in the present, but our shame will guarantee a war in the near future.

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—In September 1996, I visited Iran.

[The Secret History of Iran and John Kerry: Seth J. Frantzman, *Jerusalem Post*, Apr. 5, 2015](#) —Everything you could want to know about the Middle East’s current situation was foretold at a 2007 panel discussion in Davos, Switzerland called, “The Future of the Middle East.”

[The Diplomatic Track to War: Caroline Glick, *Jerusalem Post*, Apr. 2, 2015](#) —The world powers assembled at Lausanne, Switzerland, with the representatives of the Islamic Republic may or may not reach a framework deal regarding Iran’s nuclear program.

[For Obama, Bibi’s Words Matter While Iran’s Don’t: Shmuley Boteach, *Times of Israel*, Mar. 22, 2015](#) —President Obama says that Bibi’s words matter when it comes to a Palestinian state.

[An Agreement Worse than Munich; American Jews Serve as Enablers: Jonathan Rosenblum, *Mishpacha*, Apr. 3, 2015](#) —The other night I woke up around 4:00 a.m. in a cold sweat thinking about the Iran nuclear deal that the P5+1 is prepared to

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sign, if only Iran will agree.

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