OMNI IRAN NEWSLETTER # 23, November 12, 2013.


Here is the link to all the newsletters archived in the OMNI web site.

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/  These newsletters offer information that enables us to examine morality and judgment of our leaders and their policies, of power.  Here is the link to the Index:  http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

"To initiate a war of aggression, therefore, is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."  -- Robert H. Jackson, Chief U.S. Prosecutor, Nuremberg Military Tribunal

“It has been a mainstay of this book that successful antiwar movements are those that have been able to make direct links with those in the flight path of US aggression and to bring their struggles and concerns directly into the US political arena.  Indeed, direct comprehension of their urgent struggles has often been a radicalizing factor in antiwar campaigns."”  Richard Seymour, American Insurgents: A Brief History of American Anti-Imperialism (2012).  p. 193.

Write or Call the White House

President Obama has declared his commitment to creating the most open and accessible administration in American history. That begins with taking comments and questions from you, the public, through our website.

Call the President

PHONE NUMBERS
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414

TTY/TTD
Comments: 202-456-6213
Write a letter to the President

Here are a few simple things you can do to make sure your message gets to the White House as quickly as possible.

1. If possible, email us! This is the fastest way to get your message to President Obama.

2. If you write a letter, please consider typing it on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper. If you hand-write your letter, please consider using pen and writing as neatly as possible.

3. Please include your return address on your letter as well as your envelope. If you have an email address, please consider including that as well.

4. And finally, be sure to include the full address of the White House to make sure your message gets to us as quickly and directly as possible:

   The White House
   1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
   Washington, DC 20500

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Frank Brodhead via HAW, April 2, 2013
Frank Brodhead, HAW, May 26, 2013
The article below from the Guardian speaks about why a nuclear deal with Iran is urgently needed, and what Iran must give up. It's a little weak on what the U.S. and the Western powers must offer as part of the deal. So please read my addendum to the article which, when read by itself, repeats the "tough-minded" and largely blind to emotional nuance that has made the West's dealings with Iran so fruitless.--Rabbi Michael Lerner

The Guardian -

How President Obama can achieve a nuclear deal with Iran

Iran wants respect and nuclear power. The US doesn't want Iran to get nuclear weapons. The window is closing for a deal

Tom Rogan

theguardian.com, Tuesday 12 November 2013 13.15 GMT

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/12/iran-nuclear-deal-obama-kerry

In the cause of peace, the clock is ticking.

Western Intelligence services have delayed a nuclear Iran. Still, the evidence on the ground is unmistakable. Iranian nuclear activities increasingly point to a weaponization agenda. Of most concern: Iran's soon-to-be plutonium production facility at Arak. As David Albright and Christina Walrond of the Institute for Science and International Security note (pdf), claims of an inherently peaceful nuclear program cannot easily co-exist with a heavy water reactor. Correspondingly, in last weekend's P5+1 negotiations, the French Foreign Minister suggested that allowing Arak to remain in operation would represent a "sucker's deal".

He's right.
This isn't just about Iran's nuclear claims-capability disconnect. Once Arak reaches nuclear criticality (as things stand, probably at some point next year), any military strike on its reactor would release highly radioactive materials into the atmosphere. In this vein, any deal that fails to address Arak would force the Israeli timetable – making a near-term Israeli military strike much likelier (it would be a grave mistake to take Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's threats lightly).

Yet there's cause for hope.

Further talks are planned for the near future. In order to reach a deal, Obama must embrace a far more realistic negotiating position.

First, the US must ensure that any proposal is serious. We can't have another agreement in the form of the Syria WMD deal (the absurdity of which is rapidly becoming evident). A serious deal would require more than astute eyes. It would need teeth. This means that alongside forthright declarations on their nuclear infrastructure, Iran would have to acquiesce to unannounced IAEA spot checks (unless inspectors have freedom of search, there's no meaningful way to guard against a covert nuclear program).

At the same time, any serious deal would have to proscribe robust consequences for Iranian non-compliance – stronger sanctions as a first step and the (credible) threat of multilateral military force as a follow up. In order to persuade a skeptical Iran, US Secretary of State John Kerry should point to the looming prospect of tougher sanctions from Congress.

Second, Obama would have to ensure that any deal is perceivably sustainable – offering long term durability. Here, it will be critical to provide deal-enforcement mechanisms that reach beyond Iranian territory. In practical terms, a deal would need the co-operation of P5+1 intelligence officers and law enforcement personnel. Absent the unified resolve of the international community, any deal would quickly wither in face of self-interested agendas. Iranian hardliners would almost certainly pursue a covert weaponization program and unscrupulous business interests would wager the gambit of lucrative black market opportunities. Without a bedrock of sustainability, a deal would only be a pretense.

Third, Obama needs to realize that unless a deal is sellable to all parties, it's neither serious nor sustainable. This is perhaps the most important caveat. In order to bridge present gaps, Kerry will have to accept von Bismarck's adage – that ultimately, "politics is the art of the possible". This understanding will demand tough choices – a successful deal would be signaled by complaints from hardliners on all sides. In more specific terms, Kerry will have to balance a low percentage cap on enrichment with a closure of facilities like those at
Arak.

Herein lies the defining challenge. The US must match a respect for Iranian "prestige" with the suspension of suspected weaponization activities. Yes, allowing even minimal enrichment would lead to criticism from some quarters. Obama must be prepared to ignore the anger. In the end, recognition of Iran's "prestige" will be critical for success. Ultimately, the theocrats don't simply regard nuclear power as a prospective policy tool, but as a theological endorsement; as a vindication of their revolutionary project, as a minimum that cannot be surrendered. For Obama, the key is to bind that belief to a more measured nuclear identity.

It's true, where parties lack trust, diplomacy is seldom easy. It's also fair to say that nuclear diplomacy raises these complexities to an unequaled level. Nevertheless, without a realistic deal, figuratively or literally, the Iranian nuclear crisis is heading for meltdown. Israel will launch an attack, or Iran will become an unrestrained nuclear power. Either way, the price for diplomatic inaction is too high.

In order to preserve the intersection of peace and security, America must pursue a serious, sustainable and saleable deal with paramount urgency.

**Addendum from Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of Tikkun Magazine**

The article is clear about what Iran must concede but weak on what the Western powers must do to make this deal palatable to the moderates in the Iranian government, including its new President. In talking about moderates, I do not want to hide that I'd prefer to see the people of Iran rise up against their government and non-violently overthrow it, because the mullahs in power continue to violate the human rights of the people over whom they rule, not only dissenters, but also denying the rights of women, the rights of free assembly and a free press, using torture against dissenters and fostering hatred and oppression of B'hai and other religious minorities. The key question is not "are these people in power a tolerable bunch?" but rather "what policies should be pursued that could strengthen the possibility of the Iranian people rising up in nonviolent rebellion?" It is clear that decades of escalating sanctions has not had that impact, and if Israel, or Israel and the US, were to engage in military assault on Iran, that would loose a surge of nationalist fervor that would force even the tens of millions of Iranians who hate the current regime to rally around it against the outside attackers!!! So a deal on nuclear weapons is urgent not only because an Iran with nuclear weapons would be a danger to the world, but also because a war against Iran would likely fail to achieve a goal of permanently preventing Iran from having nuclear weapons and meanwhile would strengthen the most
reactionary voices in Iran.

The path of coercion and domination has not and will not work. So it's time to try the path of generosity and respect for the Iranian people.

Here are the necessary steps:

1. The U.S. and the countries that originally colonized Iran (France, Britain, Russia) must apologize to the Iranian people for attempting to dominate it and extract its oil for profit and power of the Western oil companies and for Western (and sometimes Russian) military power (though Russia never succeeded in the way that the Western powers did). The U.S. in particular should apologize for its support of the Shah's dictatorship that the Iranian revolution overthrew in the late 1970s, and U.S. intransigence against the Islamists once they came to power. President Obama should fly to Teheran to deliver this apology, and to publicly affirm the great contribution made to human civilization by the peoples of Persia (now Iran).

2. The U.S. should announce that within a year of the implementation of the nuclear treaty, and the proof that inspectors are being given freedom to do spot inspections to ensure compliance by Iran, that all levels of economic boycotts will be suspended and that the U.S. will be happy to enter into and economically support a common market for the Middle East that includes Iran and Israel. Moreover, the U.S. will launch the Global Marshall Plan, in coordination with the G-20, and including the terms specified in the version of the Global Marshall Plan being advanced by the Network of Spiritual Progressives (see www.tikkun.org/GMP).

3. The U.S. will announce a plan for the terms of a lasting peace accord between Israel and Palestine incorporating the elements specified in Tikkun's plan (see the Winter 2014 issue of Tikkun which will be mailed in late January, but which are substantially the same as those presented in my book Embracing Israel/Palestine which you can order at www.tikkun.org/eip). President Obama should fly to Israel, announce these terms as the only ones satisfactory to the U.S., and should announce a suspension of all military cooperation with Israel--once Iran's compliance with the treaty establishing no militarization of Iran's nuclear capacities and reliable means of enforcement have been agreed to and implemented and verified) until Israel itself implements the terms of the peace agreement stipulated by the U.S.and presented in Embracing Israel/Palestine. In case this is not sufficient to get Israel to accept those terms, the U.S. should announce that failure to implement that proposal will lead to economic as well as military boycott of Israel by the US and other Western powers.

4. The U.S. should demand of Iran that it explicitly acknowledge the existence of Israel and renounce any intent to destroy the State of Israel or otherwise deny the Jewish people the right to
national self-determination in the Middle East, and that it acknowledge the same rights for the Kurds, and affirm religious freedom for all minority groups including the Ba'hai.

This is the path to a safe and lasting agreement with Iran that will work and be sustainable, and will incidentally push Israel to do what is in any event in its long-term survival interests to do anyway.

Please feel free to republish my comments, send it to your friends, put it on your Facebook page and other social media, and put it on your own website, if and only if you also at least summarize the Guardian article which stipulates the terms and enforcements of a nuclear agreement with the Iranian government. And urge anyone who agrees with it to join our Network of Spiritual Progressives and thereby support us to do the important work of showing what a world based on generosity rather than domination could look like.

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email: info@spiritualprogressives.org

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Action Alert

NBC's Iran Bomb

Shocking nuclear news wasn't news at all

FAIR, fair@fair.org, 9/30/13

NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams told viewers on September 27 that Iran was "suddenly claiming they don't want nuclear weapons." But that is incorrect: Iran has said the same thing for years, sometimes directly to Williams himself.

The report was about the Phone call between Barack Obama and Iranian president Hassan Rouhani:

This is all part of a new leadership effort by Iran, suddenly claiming they don't want nuclear weapons. What they want now is talks and transparency and goodwill.
This is similar to the line that NBC Nightly News took last week, when correspondent Ann Curry interviewed Rouhani on the September 18 newscast (FAIR Blog, 9/19/13). Williams said the interview included "big revelations about nuclear weapons." That was presumably referring to the fact that Rouhani said Iran was not interested in developing a nuclear weapon:

We have time and again said that under no circumstances would we seek any weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, nor will we ever.

But NBC should know that this isn't a "sudden" change at all; Iran has sent the same message for years--and it has been reported on NBC Nightly News.

Like on the September 19, 2006, newscast, when Williams interviewed Iran's then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad:

**WILLIAMS**: And the American president says, "It's OK, keep your nuclear program to keep your homes warm. Stop enriching uranium toward weapons." How do you react?

**AHMADINEJAD**: Who is the right judge for that? Any entity except for the IAEA? All IAEA reports indicate that Iran has had no deviation. We have said on numerous occasions that our activities are for peaceful purposes. The agency's cameras videotape all activities that we have. Did Iran build the atomic bomb and use it? You must know that because of our beliefs in our religion, we are against such acts. We are against the atomic bomb. We believe bombs are used only to kill people.

Almost two years later, Williams interviewed Ahmadinejad again (NBC Nightly News, 7/28/08), who said this:

We are not working to manufacture a bomb. We don't believe in a nuclear bomb. We also think that it will not affect political relations..... Nuclear bombs belong to the 20th century. We are living in a new century. We think that when it came to the nuclear issue, an inappropriate measure or action was taken. Nuclear energy must not be equaled to a nuclear bomb. This is a disservice to the--to the society of man.

NBC Nightly News (9/17/09) aired another Ahmadinejad interview where he said the same thing. And Williams (12/3/07) in 2007 reported the US government's own assessment that Iran is not working on a nuclear weapon:"Out of nowhere the US said today it has intelligence that Iran stopped trying to develop atomic weapons four years ago."

On the September 27 newscast, Williams said of Rouhani: "It's tempting for peace-loving people to get excited about all this. And it comes down to the question, can we trust the guy?"

But can US television viewers trust Williams to remember his own network's reporting on Iran? Apparently not. US politicians' frequent unsubstantiated claims about Iran making nuclear weapons must be more memorable.

**ACTION:**
Tell NBC Nightly News to correct the record: Iran's insistence that it does not seek nuclear
Glenn Greenwald, Brian Williams' Iran Propagan

Greenwald writes: "Yes, Iran's claim that they don't want nuclear weapons sure is 'sudden' - if you pretend that virtually everything that they've said on that question for the past ten years does not exist."

READ MORE
All of a sudden we’re talking to Iran. Now, granted, that shouldn’t be such an astonishing bombshell. But given the reality of the last several decades, it pretty much is. And that’s all good. It’s been too long coming, it’s still too hesitant, there’s still too much hinting about military force behind it... but we’re talking. Foreign minister to foreign minister, Kerry to Zarif, it’s all a good sign.

There were lots of problem areas in the speech—President Obama was right when he said that US policy in the Middle East would lead to charges of “hypocrisy and inconsistency.” US policy—its protection of Israeli violations of international law, its privileging of petro-monarchies over human rights, its coddling of military dictators—remains rank with hypocrisy
and inconsistency. And Obama’s speech reflected much of it.

But President Obama’s speech at the United Nations General Assembly reflected some of the extraordinary shifts in global—especially Middle East and most especially Syria-related—politics that have taken shape in the last six or eight weeks. And on Iran, that was good news. Yes the president trotted out his familiar litany that “we are determined to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.” But this time, there was no “all options on the table” threat. He added explicitly that “we are not seeking regime change and we respect the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy.” The reference to Iran’s right to nuclear energy represented a major shift away from the longstanding claim among many US hawks and the Israeli government that Iran must give up all nuclear enrichment.

Respecting Iran’s right to “access” nuclear energy is still a bit of a dodge, of course—Article IV of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) recognizes not just access but “the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.” Iran is a longstanding signatory to the NPT, and is entitled to all those rights. Obama referred only that “we insist that the Iranian government meet its responsibilities” under the NPT, while saying nothing about Iran’s rights under the treaty. But the high visibility US recognition of any Iranian right to nuclear power—in the context of a new willingness to open talks—is still enormously important.

It was also important that President Obama spoke of Iran with respect, acknowledging Iranian interests and opinions as legitimate and parallel to Washington’s. He recognized that Iranian mistrust of the United States has “deep roots,” referencing (however carefully) the “history of US interference in their affairs and of America’s role in overthrowing an Iranian government during the Cold War.” In fact, his identification of the 1953 US-backed coup that overthrew Iran’s democratically elected President Mohamed Mossadegh as a product of the Cold War may have been part of an effort to distance himself and his administration from those actions. (It’s a bit disingenuous, of course. The primary rationale for the coup was far more a response to Mossadegh’s nationalization of Iran’s oil than to his ties to the Soviet Union.)

Obama also paid new attention to longstanding Iranian positions. He noted that “the Supreme Leader has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, and President Rouhani has just recently reiterated that the Islamic Republic will never develop a nuclear weapon.” Now anyone following the Iran nuclear issue knows that the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, stated at least as far back as 2003 that nuclear weapons are a violation of Islamic law and Iran would never build or use one, and the fatwa, or legal opinion, was issued at least as far back as 2005. This isn’t new. But for President Obama to mention those judgments in the context of “the basis for a meaningful agreement” is indeed new.
Mainstream US press and officials have long derided those statements, claiming that fatwas are not binding, that 700-year-old religious laws can’t have a position on nuclear weapons, etc. But in so doing they ignore the real significance—that President Rouhani, the Supreme Leader and the rest of Iran’s government have to answer to their own population too. After years of repeating that nuclear weapons would be un-Islamic, would violate a fatwa, etc., it would not be so easy for Iran’s leaders to win popular support for a decision to embrace the bomb.

There is a long way to go in challenging aspects of President Obama’s speech at the United Nations—his embrace of American exceptionalism and his recommittal to a failed approach to Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, his view that war and violence can only be answered by military force or nothing, and more. He didn’t explicitly state a willingness to accept Iran’s participation in international talks on Syria. There is a serious danger that any move towards rapprochement with Iran would be matched with moves to pacify Israeli demands—almost certainly at the expense of Palestinian rights.

But in the broader scenario of US-Iran relations, this is a moment to move forward, to welcome the new approach in Washington now answering the new approach of Tehran.

More flexibility will be required than the United States is usually known for. The usual opponents—in Congress, in Israel and the pro-Israel lobbies—are already on the move, challenging the new opening. But these last weeks showed how a quickly organized demonstration of widespread public opinion, demanding negotiations instead of war, can win. We were able to build a movement fast, agile and powerful enough to reverse an imminent military attack on Syria and instead force a move towards diplomatic solutions to end the war. This time around, the demand to deepen, consolidate and not abandon diplomatic possibilities is on our agenda—and perhaps once again we can win.

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Phyllis Bennis is a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies. Her books include Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer, Understanding the U.S.-Iran Crisis: A Primer, Ending the Iraq War: A Primer, and most recently Ending the Us War in Afghanistan: A Primer. If you want to receive her talking points and articles on a regular basis, click here and choose “New Internationalism.” You can find her on Facebook here: http://www.facebook.com/PhyllisBennis
Iran President Rules Out Ever Building Nuclear Bomb

Dan Roberts, Guardian UK, 19 September 13 AM

Roberts reports: "Iran's new president Hassan Rouhani has told an American television audience he is hopeful of a diplomatic breakthrough over Tehran's nuclear weapons programme, insisting his country had no intention of developing weapons of mass destruction."

Let's Talk it Out

CODEPINK  info@codepink.org via uark.edu

After decades of saber rattling, it's time for diplomacy with Iran. Yesterday President Obama and Iranian President Rouhani both gave speeches at the United Nations indicating the ice is thawing between our two countries. This makes us hopeful, but we need to keep the peace process moving: Tell your representatives today that instead of crippling sanctions, we want diplomacy!

In the past CODEPINK has teamed up with Iranian and Israeli women to oppose war on Iran, with the support of prominent changemakers like Alice Walker, Gloria Steinem, and Eve Ensler. We've protested, lobbied, delivered petitions, and taken peace delegations to Iran. We know that the sanctions imposed by our government are only harming the people of Iran. With a new government open to reconciliation, we must push the US to seize this opportunity.

Wealthy lobby groups like AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) are relentlessly clamoring for increased hostilities towards Iran. That's why it's so important to reach out to your representatives today and tell them we want diplomacy, not crippling sanctions or war.

Towards a more peaceful world,
Alli, Amanda, Kelleen, Jeremy, Jodie, Linda, Medea, Nancy K, Nancy M, Natasha, Noor, Roqayah, Sergei, and Tighe

FOCUS: Robert Scheer | The Moment the US Ended Iran's Brief Experiment in Democracy, RSN
Robert Scheer, Truthdig, August 20, 2013

Scheer writes: "Tragically, the coup that overthrew Mossadegh also crushed Iran's brief experiment in democracy and ushered in six decades of brutal dictatorship followed by religious oppression and regional instability. If Iran is a problem, as the United States persistently and loudly insists, it is a problem of our making."

The US government at the time of the coup easily had manipulated Western media into denigrating Mossadegh as intemperate, unstable and an otherwise unreliable ally in the Cold War, but the real motivation for hijacking Iran's history was Mossadegh's move to nationalize Western-controlled oil assets in Iran. According to the document, part of an internal CIA report:

The target of this policy of desperation, Mohammad Mosadeq, [sic] was neither a madman nor an emotional bundle of senility as he was so often pictured in the foreign press; however, he had become so committed to the ideals of nationalism that he did things that could not have conceivably helped his people even in the best and most altruistic of worlds. In refusing to bargain - except on his own uncompromising terms - with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, he was in fact defying the professional politicians of the British government. These leaders believed, with good reason, that cheap oil for Britain and high profits for the company were vital to their national interests.

HARPER’S MAGAZINE, ARCHIVE / 2013 / SEPTEMBER

“A Very Perfect Instrument: The ferocity and failure of America’s sanctions apparatus”

By Andrew Cockburn

At the beginning of World War I, Britain set up a blockade designed, according to one of its architects, Winston Churchill, to “starve the whole population of Germany — men, women and
children, old and young, wounded and sound — into submission.” By January 1918, the country’s food supply had been reduced by half and its civilians were dying almost at the same rate as its soldiers. When the war finally ended eleven months later, the Germans assumed the blockade would be lifted and they would be fed again.

Instead the blockade went on, and was even tightened. By the following spring, German authorities were projecting a threefold increase in infant mortality. In March 1919, General Herbert Plumer, commander of British occupation forces in the Rhineland, told Prime Minister David Lloyd George that his men could no longer stand the sight of “hordes of skinny and bloated children pawing over the offal” from the British camps.

In a later memoir, the economist John Maynard Keynes, at the time a chief adviser to the British Treasury, attributed this collective punishment of the civilian population. . . .

MORE:  http://harpers.org/archive/2013/09/a-very-perfect-instrument/


IF ISRAEL WERE TO ATTACK IRAN WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Nuclear Terror in the Middle East
By Nick Turse, TomDispatch 13 May, 2013
Nuclear Terror in the Middle East
By Nick Turse, TomDispatch 13 May, 2013

In those first minutes, they'll be stunned. Eyes fixed in a thousand-yard stare, nerve endings numbed. They'll just stand there. Soon, you'll notice that they are holding their arms out at a 45-degree angle. Your eyes will be drawn to their hands and you'll think you mind is playing tricks. But it won't be. Their fingers will start to resemble stalactites, seeming to melt toward the ground. And it won't be long until the screaming begins. Shrieking. Moaning. Tens of thousands of victims at once. They'll be standing amid a sea of shattered concrete and glass, a wasteland punctuated by the shells of buildings, orphaned walls, stairways leading nowhere.

This could be Tehran, or what's left of it, just after an Israeli nuclear strike.

Iranian cities -- owing to geography, climate, building construction, and population densities -- are particularly vulnerable to nuclear attack, according to a new study, "Nuclear War Between Israel and Iran: Lethality Beyond the Pale," published in the journal Conflict & Health by researchers from the University of Georgia and Harvard University. It is the first publicly released scientific assessment of what a nuclear attack in the Middle East might actually mean for people in the region.

Its scenarios are staggering. An Israeli attack on the Iranian capital of Tehran using five 500-kiloton weapons would, the study estimates, kill seven million people -- 86% of the population -- and leave close to 800,000 wounded. A strike with five 250-kiloton weapons would kill an estimated 5.6 million and injure 1.6 million, according to predictions made using an advanced software package designed to calculate mass casualties from a nuclear detonation.

Estimates of the civilian toll in other Iranian cities are even more horrendous. A nuclear assault on the city of Arak, the site of a heavy water plant central to Iran's nuclear program, would potentially kill 93% of its 424,000 residents. Three 100-kiloton nuclear weapons hitting the Persian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas would slaughter an estimated 94% of its 468,000 citizens, leaving just 1% of the population uninjured. A multi-weapon strike on Kermanshah, a Kurdish city with a population of 752,000, would result in an almost unfathomable 99.9% casualty rate.

Cham Dallas, the director of the Institute for Health Management and Mass Destruction Defense at the University of Georgia and lead author of the study, says that the projections are the most catastrophic he's seen in more than 30 years analyzing weapons of mass destruction and their potential effects. "The fatality rates are the highest of any nuke simulation I've ever done," he told me by phone from the
nuclear disaster zone in Fukushima, Japan, where he was doing research. "It's the perfect storm for high fatality rates."

Israel has never confirmed or denied possessing nuclear weapons, but is widely known to have up to several hundred nuclear warheads in its arsenal. Iran has no nuclear weapons and its leaders claim that its nuclear program is for peaceful civilian purposes only. Published reports suggest that American intelligence agencies and Israel's intelligence service are in agreement: Iran suspended its nuclear weapons development program in 2003.

Dallas and his colleagues nonetheless ran simulations for potential Iranian nuclear strikes on the Israeli cities of Beer Sheva, Haifa, and Tel Aviv using much smaller 15-kiloton weapons, similar in strength to those dropped by the United States on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Their analyses suggest that, in Beer Shiva, half of the population of 209,000 would be killed and one-sixth injured. Haifa would see similar casualty ratios, including 40,000 trauma victims. A strike on Tel Aviv with two 15-kiloton weapons would potentially slaughter 17% of the population -- nearly 230,000 people. Close to 150,000 residents would likely be injured.

These forecasts, like those for Iranian cities, are difficult even for experts to assess. "Obviously, accurate predictions of casualty and fatality estimates are next to impossible to obtain," says Dr. Glen Reeves, a longtime consultant on the medical effects of radiation for the Defense Department's Defense Threat Reduction Agency, who was not involved in the research. "I think their estimates are probably high but not impossibly so."

According to Paul Carroll of the Ploughshares Fund, a San Francisco-based foundation that advocates for nuclear disarmament, "the results would be catastrophic" if major Iranian cities were attacked with modern nuclear weapons. "I don't see 75% [fatality rates as] being out of the question," says Carroll, after factoring in the longer-term effects of radiation sickness, burns, and a devastated medical infrastructure.

According to Dallas and his colleagues, the marked disparity between estimated fatalities in Israel and Iran can be explained by a number of factors. As a start, Israel is presumed to have extremely powerful nuclear weapons and sophisticated delivery capabilities including long-range Jericho missiles, land-based cruise missiles, submarine-launched missiles, and advanced aircraft with precision targeting technology.

The nature of Iranian cities also makes them exceptionally vulnerable to nuclear attack, according to the Conflict & Health study. Tehran, for instance, is home to 50% of Iran's industry, 30% of its public sector workers, and 50 colleges and universities. As a result, 12 million people live in or near the capital, most of them clustered in its core. Like most Iranian cities, Tehran has little urban sprawl, meaning residents tend to live and work in areas that would be subject to maximum devastation and would suffer high percentages of fatalities due to trauma as well as thermal burns caused by the flash of heat from an explosion.

Iran's topography, specifically mountains around cities, would obstruct the dissipation of the blast and heat from a nuclear explosion, intensifying the effects. Climatic conditions, especially high concentrations of airborne dust, would likely exacerbate thermal and radiation casualties as well as wound infections.

**Nuclear Horror: Then and Now**

The first nuclear attack on a civilian population center, the U.S. strike on Hiroshima, left that city "uniformly and extensively devastated," according to a study carried out in the wake of the attacks by the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey. "Practically the entire densely or moderately built-up portion of the city was leveled by blast and swept by fire... The surprise, the collapse of many buildings, and the conflagration contributed to an unprecedented casualty rate." At the time, local health authorities reported that 60% of immediate deaths were due to flash or flame burns and medical investigators estimated that 15%-20% of the deaths were caused by radiation.
Witnesses "stated that people who were in the open directly under the explosion of the bomb were so severely burned that the skin was charred dark brown or black and that they died within a few minutes or hours," according to the 1946 report. "Among the survivors, the burned areas of the skin showed evidence of burns almost immediately after the explosion. At first there was marked redness, and other evidence of thermal burns appeared within the next few minutes or hours."

Many victims kept their arms outstretched because it was too painful to allow them to hang at their sides and rub against their bodies. One survivor recalled seeing victims "with both arms so severely burned that all the skin was hanging from their arms down to their nails, and others having faces swollen like bread, losing their eyesight. It was like ghosts walking in procession... Some jumped into a river because of their serious burns. The river was filled with the wounded and blood."

The number of fatalities at Hiroshima has been estimated at 140,000. A nuclear attack on Nagasaki three days later is thought to have killed 70,000. Today, according to Dallas, 15-kiloton nuclear weapons of the type used on Japan are referred to by experts as "firecracker nukes" due to their relative weakness.

In addition to killing more than 5.5 million people, a strike on Tehran involving five 250-kiloton weapons -- each of them 16 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima -- would result in an estimated 803,000 third-degree burn victims, with close to 300,000 others suffering second degree burns, and 750,000 to 880,000 people severely exposed to radiation. "Those people with thermal burns over most of their bodies we can't help," says Dallas. "Most of these people are not going to survive... there is no saving them. They'll be in intense agony." As you move out further from the site of the blast, he says, "it actually gets worse. As the damage decreases, the pain increases, because you're not numb."

In a best case scenario, there would be 1,000 critically injured victims for every surviving doctor but "it will probably be worse," according to Dallas. Whatever remains of Tehran's healthcare system will be inundated with an estimated 1.5 million trauma sufferers. In a feat of understatement, the researchers report that survivors "presenting with combined injuries including either thermal burns or radiation poisoning are unlikely to have favorable outcomes."

Iranian government officials did not respond to a request for information about how Tehran would cope in the event of a nuclear attack. When asked if the U.S. military could provide humanitarian aid to Iran after such a strike, a spokesman for Central Command, whose area of responsibility includes the Middle East, was circumspect. "U.S. Central Command plans for a wide range of contingencies to be prepared to provide options to the Secretary of Defense and the President," he told this reporter. But Frederick Burkle, a senior fellow at the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and Harvard University's School of Public Health, as well as a coauthor of the just-published article, is emphatic that the U.S. military could not cope with the scale of the problem. "I must also say that no country or international body is prepared to offer the assistance that would be needed," he told me.

Dallas and his team spent five years working on their study. Their predictions were generated using a declassified version of a software package developed for the Defense Department's Defense Threat Reduction Agency, as well as other complementary software applications. According to Glen Reeves, the software used fails to account for many of the vagaries and irregularities of an urban environment. These, he says, would mitigate some of the harmful effects. Examples would be buildings or cars providing protection from flash burns. He notes, however, that built-up areas can also exacerbate the number of deaths and injuries. Blast effects far weaker than what would be necessary to injure the lungs can, for instance, topple a house. "Your office building can collapse... before your eardrums pop!" notes Reeves.

The new study provides the only available scientific predictions to date about what a nuclear attack in the Middle East might actually mean. Dallas, who was previously the director of the Center for Mass Destruction Defense at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is quick to point out that the
Rattling Sabers and Nuclear Denial

Frederick Burkle points out that, today, discussions about nuclear weapons in the Middle East almost exclusively center on whether or not Iran will produce an atomic bomb instead of "focusing on ensuring that there are options for them to embrace an alternate sense of security." He warns that the repercussions may be grave. "The longer this goes on the more we empower that singularthinking both within Iran and Israel."

Even if Iran were someday to build several small nuclear weapons, their utility would be limited. After all, analysts note that Israel would be capable of launching a post-attack response which would simply devastate Iran. Right now, Israel is the only nuclear-armed state in the Middle East. Yet a preemptive Israeli nuclear strike against Iran also seems an unlikely prospect to most experts.

"Currently, there is little chance of a true nuclear war between the two nations," according to Paul Carroll of the Ploughshares Fund. Israel, he points out, would be unlikely to use nuclear weapons unless its very survival were at stake. "However, Israel's rhetoric about red lines and the threat of a nuclear Iran are something we need to worry about," he told me recently by email. "A military strike to defeat Iran's nuclear capacity would A) not work B) ensure that Iran WOULD then pursue a bomb (something they have not clearly decided to do yet) and C) risk a regional war."

Cham Dallas sees the threat in even starker terms. "The Iranians and the Israelis are both committed to conflict," he told me. He isn't alone in voicing concern. "What will we do if Israel threatens Tehran with nuclear obliteration?... A nuclear battle in the Middle East, one-sided or not, would be the most destabilizing military event since Pearl Harbor," wrote Pulitzer Prize-winning national security reporter Tim Weiner in a recent op-ed for Bloomberg News. "Our military commanders know a thousand ways in which a war could start between Israel and Iran... No one has ever fought a nuclear war, however. No one knows how to end one."

The Middle East is hardly the only site of potential nuclear catastrophe. Today, according to the Ploughshares Fund, there are an estimated 17,300 nuclear weapons in the world. Russia reportedly has the most with 8,500; North Korea, the fewest with less than 10. Donald Cook, the administrator for defense programs at the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration, recently confirmed that the United States possesses around 4,700 nuclear warheads. Other nuclear powers include rivals India and Pakistan, which stood on the brink of nuclear war in 2002. (Just this year, Indian government officials warned residents of Kashmir, the divided territory claimed by both nations, to prepare for a possible nuclear war.) Recently, India and nuclear-armed neighbor China, which went to war with each other in the 1960s, again found themselves on the verge of a crisis due to a border dispute in a remote area of the Himalayas.

In a world awash in nuclear weapons, saber-rattling, brinkmanship, erratic behavior, miscalculations, technological errors, or errors in judgment could lead to a nuclear detonation and suffering on an almost unimaginable scale, perhaps nowhere more so than in Iran. "Not only would the immediate impacts be devastating, but the lingering effects and our ability to deal with them would be far more difficult than a 9/11 or earthquake/tsunami event," notes Paul Carroll. Radiation could turn areas of a country into no-go zones; healthcare infrastructure would be crippled or totally destroyed; and depending on climatic conditions and the prevailing winds, whole regions might have their agriculture poisoned. "One large bomb could do this, let alone a handful, say, in a South Asian conflict," he told me.

"I do believe that the longer we have these weapons and the more there are, the greater the chances that we will experience either an intentional attack (state-based or terrorist) or an accident," Carroll wrote in his email. "In many ways, we've been lucky since 1945. There have been some very close calls. But our
luck won't hold forever."

Cham Dallas says there is an urgent need to grapple with the prospect of nuclear attacks, not later, but now. "There are going to be other big public health issues in the twenty-first century, but in the first third, this is it. It's a freight train coming down the tracks," he told me. "People don't want to face this. They're in denial."

**After Ahmadinejad, Alarmism Still Reigns**


**After Ahmadinejad, Alarmism Still Reigns**

Spinning Iranian election results to maintain an official enemy

By Nima Shirazi

With the surprise election (CNN, 6/15/13) of moderate pragmatist Hassan Rouhani as the next president of Iran, and the attendant departure of the West’s favorite bogeyman, outgoing President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, from the political
stage, U.S. elite media have had to rapidly adapt the collective narrative in order to maintain their alarmist depiction of the Islamic Republic. For the past eight years, references to what is perceived as Ahmadinejad’s bombastic rhetoric abounded in political speeches and were readily parroted by the press (Extra!, 6/12). He was routinely presented as a megalomaniacal, apocalyptic madman, hell-bent on developing nuclear weapons in order to annihilate Israel (e.g., New York Daily News, 9/23/11).

Hassan Rouhani: moderate pragmatist as mullah pawn.

While Iran’s political and religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has always had final say over the direction of Iran’s nuclear program—one which, despite a decade of intrusive inspection, has never been found to have a military dimension (Reuters, 2/22/13)—this fact is only now deemed noteworthy without Ahmadinejad to kick around anymore. For years, the media produced report after hysterical report (Jerusalem Post, 5/10/06; NBC News, 9/25/07; Fox News, 9/11/12) on the Iranian nuclear program without mentioning Khamenei (Foreign Policy, 11/9/09; Christian Science Monitor, 11/8/11; AFP, 10/8/12).

With Ahmadinejad’s coming departure from the political stage and an election on the horizon, government officials, commentators and reporters alike had been tactfully pivoting away from placing any emphasis on the Islamic Republic’s elected executive, focusing instead on the office of the supreme leader. This way, regardless of how the vote turned out, the Iranian leadership would appear stagnant, the election written off as “meaningless” (National Review, 6/13/13), and the established perception of a threatening, intransigent Iran would go unchallenged.

The neoconservative opinion editors of the Washington Post eagerly led the charge. A pre-election editorial (6/12/13) determined that “the country’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has ensured that only conservative regime loyalists were allowed to enter Friday’s first round of elections,” and that, regardless of who succeeds Ahmadinejad, “all authority over foreign policy will lie with the ayatollah.” The Post definitively declared, “Mr. Rouhani, who has emerged as the default candidate of Iran’s reformists, will not be allowed to win.”
When the dust settled from the Iranian ballots, and Rouhani had in fact won, the Post’s editors (6/18/13) were unfazed. Suddenly, “there was good reason” why Khamenei “chose to accept [Rouhani’s] victory.” After all, they wrote, Rouhani—with his “more moderate face”—was “a reliable follower of the supreme leader” who could well make it easier for Tehran to resist sanctions and other international pressure without slowing its progress toward a nuclear bomb, its intervention in Syria’s civil war or its sponsorship of terrorism.

The Wall Street Journal’s editorial board (6/17/13) agreed. “Expect Mr. Rouhani to go along for the talks, but mainly to ease Western sanctions and buy more nuclear time,” they wrote.

Similarly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has accused Ahmadinejad of “expanding a fanatic doctrine of genocide” and “developing nuclear weapons to achieve it” (AP, 9/25/07), declared after Rouhani’s victory (Washington Post, 6/20/13) that the nuclear program is “guided and controlled by Khamenei. He remains committed to pursuing the path of arming Iran with nuclear weapons, and I’m afraid the elections are not going to change that.” Israeli officials are reportedly frustrated that Rouhani’s election makes the chances of a U.S.-led military strike even more remote than it already was (Ha’aretz, 6/18/13).

**While before the election**, Rouhani was viewed as presenting too much of a challenge to the Iranian regime to be permitted to win, the predominant line afterwards was that he was, at best, an ayatollah-approved figurehead signaling a clever change in the Iranian leadership’s public relations campaign (New York Times, 6/17/13) —and proving that the crippling sanctions regime was working (Washington Post, 6/17/13; AP, 6/20/13).

Rather than acknowledging his election as a democratic choice by an engaged and informed populace with its own national, cultural and societal interests, according to many, Rouhani had simply been permitted to triumph by the supreme leader (Foreign Affairs, 6/16/13; New York Times, 6/17/13). As Time managing editor Richard Stengel said to Bob Schieffer on Face the Nation two days after the vote (6/16/13), “Ayatollah Khamenei runs everything, basically, so he allowed this to happen.”

For those pushing military action on behalf of Israel, however, Rouhani is deemed a pathetic pawn of the mullahs, Khamenei’s hand-picked Trojan Horse—a “tool,” as leading neoconservatives Reuel Marc Gerecht (New York Times, 6/17/13) and John Bolton (Fox News, 6/18/13) each wrote. Despite the massive voter turnout and subsequent public celebrations in the streets of Iranian cities and towns, the election was cited as further proof that the Iranian people have no voice or representation in
their own government (Foreign Affairs, 6/16/13; New York Times, 6/17/13; Weekly Standard, 6/20/13).

Bill Neely, writing for NBC News (6/18/13), noted that Rouhani is a “wily negotiator” who, between 2003 and 2005, “kept Iran’s nuclear program going without sanctions being imposed and without Iran being referred to the United Nations Security Council.” Rouhani “presents Israel with a challenge,” Neely explained. “Repeating the same phrases about the clock ticking and military options won’t be enough for Israel now—it may have to find another way to check Iran’s nuclear ambitions.”

In the meantime, efforts to demonize Rouhani himself were well underway. His academic bona fides were questioned (New York Times, 6/17/13), only to have the Scottish institution from which he received his Ph.D. issue a statement on his behalf. Rouhani was also accused of duplicity during his tenure as nuclear negotiator (Atlantic, 6/17/13; Reuters, 6/19/13) and implicated by the Wall Street Journal (6/20/13) in terrorist attacks that occurred in the 1990s. Both allegations have been effectively debunked (LobeLog, 6/25/13; Times of Israel, 6/24/13; National Interest, 6/28/13).

At the beginning of July, members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee sent a letter to President Obama making sure that, just because Ahmadinejad’s term is up, Iran must not cease to be villainized, threatened and bullied. “Iran’s election unfortunately has done nothing to suggest a reversal of Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear weapons capacity,” it read. “President-elect Rouhani, who served as a nuclear negotiator for Iran at a time its illicit program was well underway, indicated his support for Iran’s nuclear ambitions in his first post-election press conference.” The letter, which, like most Iran-related correspondence and legislation, was reportedly drafted by AIPAC staffers (LobeLog, 7/2/13), continued, “Indeed, there appears nothing ‘moderate’ about his nuclear policies,” and noted, “Moreover, decisions about Iran’s nuclear program and foreign policy rest mainly in the hands of Iran’s Supreme Leader Khamenei.” As a result, the House members insisted, “Iran must face intensifying pressure” in the form of more sanctions. But neither AIPAC nor its friends in Congress needed to worry about the media, which had already fully absorbed the message.
During a broadcast of Good Morning America (6/16/13) shortly after the election, co-anchor Dan Harris spoke with ABC News White House correspondent Jonathan Karl about the prospects of improved relations between the United States and Iran. After describing Ahmadinejad as “one of the most controversial people on Earth” and someone who “helped push Iran’s nuclear program,” Harris asked Karl whether the election of “a much more moderate successor, Hassan Rouhani,” would “make any difference for Americans? Can we worry any less about the possibility of a conflict with Iran now?”

“Well, maybe a little less, Dan,” Karl replied, noting what he described as Rouhani’s campaign platform of “a more conciliatory approach with the West and more freedom at home.”

“But remember,” Karl quickly added, “those clerics control everything in Iran, including the nuclear program. And Ayatollah Khamenei is still the man in charge and, make no mistake, he is avowedly anti-American and pro-nuclear Iran.”

Not to be outdone, Harris interjected, “And this new president-elect is also pro-nuclear Iran.”

“Absolutely,” Karl replied.

Nima Shirazi is an editor at the online magazine Muftah and writes the political blog Wide Asleep in America.

http://vaccineliberationarmy.com/2013/07/06/ed-snowden-war-on-whistleblowers/

Beyond Snowden: US General Cartwright has been indicted for espionage

21st Century Wire Tuesday, 02 July 2013

While the world focuses on Washington’s pursuit of NSA whistleblower Ed Snowden, another much more high ranking member of the US power structure has been indicted for espionage this week…

US General James Cartwright was regarded by Washington insiders as ‘Obama’s General’, and now he’s facing prosecution for blowing the whistle on ‘Operation Olympic Games’ which planted the Stuxnet and Flame viruses in Iranian nuclear facilities in order derail Iran’s civilian nuclear program. At closer examination, it appears that Cartwright’s revelations didn’t so much harm US interests per say, but they hindered Israeli ambitions towards a war with Iran.

http://vaccineliberationarmy.com/2013/07/06/ed-snowden-war-on-whistleblowers/
Double Standard in Nuclear Weapons Policy

Mon Mar 4, 2013 1:09 pm (PST) . Posted by:
"Korea Peace Campaign"

*Op-Ed by **Desmond Tutu
*3/4/2013, *Guardian*

We cannot intimidate others into behaving well when we ourselves are misbehaving. Yet that is precisely what nations armed with nuclear weapons hope to do by censuring North Korea for its nuclear tests and sounding alarm bells over Iran's pursuit of enriched uranium. According to their logic, a select few nations can ensure the security of all by having the capacity to destroy all.

*Until we overcome this double standard – until we accept that nuclear weapons are abhorrent and a grave danger no matter who possesses them, that threatening a city with radioactive incineration is intolerable no matter the nationality or religion of its inhabitants – we are unlikely to make meaningful progress in halting the spread of these monstrous devices, let alone banishing them from national arsenals.*

Why, for instance, would a proliferating state pay heed to the exhortations of the US and Russia, which retain thousands of their nuclear warheads on high alert? How can Britain, France and China expect a hearing on non-proliferation while they squander billions modernising their nuclear forces? What standing has Israel to urge Iran not to acquire the bomb when it harbours its own atomic arsenal?

Nuclear weapons do not discriminate; nor should our leaders. The nuclear powers must apply the same standard to themselves as to others: zero nuclear weapons. Whereas the international community has imposed blanket bans on other weapons with horrendous effects – from biological and chemical agents to landmines and cluster munitions – it has not yet done so for the very worst weapons of all. Nuclear weapons are still seen as legitimate in the hands of some. This must change....

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/mar/04/nuclear-weapons-must-be-eradicated
An eye-opening argument for a new approach to Iran, from two of America's most informed and influential Middle East experts

Less than a decade after Washington endorsed a fraudulent case for invading Iraq, similarly misinformed and politically motivated claims are pushing America toward war with Iran. Today the stakes are even higher: such a war could break the back of America's strained superpower status. Challenging the daily clamor of U.S. saber rattling, Flynt and Hillary Mann Leverett argue that America should renounce thirty years of failed strategy and engage with Iran—just as Nixon revolutionized U.S. foreign policy by going to Beijing and realigning relations with China.

Former analysts in both the Bush and Clinton administrations, the Leveretts offer a uniquely informed account of Iran as it actually is today, not as many have caricatured it or wished it to be. They show that Iran's political order is not on the verge of collapse, that most Iranians still support the Islamic Republic, and that Iran's regional influence makes it critical to progress in the Middle East. Drawing on years of research and access to high-level officials, Going to Tehran explains how Iran sees the world and why its approach to foreign policy is hardly the irrational behavior of a rogue nation.

A bold call for new thinking, the Leveretts' indispensable work makes it clear that America must "go to Tehran" if it is to avert strategic catastrophe.
1. **The Race for Iran**
www.raceforiran.com/

Race for Iran is Going to Tehran – Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett. If President Obama cannot get a negotiation going with the Iranians in the next ...

2. **Going to Tehran: Why the United States Must Come to Terms with ...**
www.amazon.com › Books › History › Middle East › Iran

Going to Tehran: Why the United States Must Come to Terms with the Islamic Republic of Iran [Flynt Leverett, Hillary Mann Leverett] on Amazon.com. *FREE* ...

3. **Dissecting America's Iran Debate: Flynt Leverett ... - Going to Tehran**
.goingtotehran.com/dissecting-americas-iran-debate-flynt-leverett-on-con...

May 4, 2013 – The half-hour episode, also titled “Going to Tehran,” is available on You... 102 Responses to “Dissecting America’s Iran Debate: Flynt Leverett ...

4. **'Going to Tehran,' by Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett ...**
www.nytimes.com/.../going-to-tehran-by-flynt-leverett-and-hillary-mann-l...

The Iran Syndrome. 'Going to Tehran,' by Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett. By LAURA SECOR. Published: March 1, 2013. There is much to be said for ...
President Rohani: Iran and the Holy See together in the fight against extremism


**Historians Against the War is posting Frank Brodhead's "Iran War Weekly,':**

as a helpful resource for our members and friends. Frank earned a PhD in history at Princeton University and has co-authored several books on US foreign policy. He is a scholar and political activist who has worked with peace and social justice movements for many years. In 2010-2011 he produced the “Afghanistan War Weekly,” which was widely used by antiwar groups across the country.

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**Iran War Weekly**

**April 2, 2013**

Hello All – Following a “successful” renewal of negotiations in February, and an ambiguous round of technical talks in March, Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany) are set to meet again in Kazakhstan at the end of this week. What are the prospects for progress in resolving disputes about Iran’s nuclear program and (not incidentally) reducing the prospects for war?

The basic parameters of these talks will pit demands by the United States that Iran cease or reduce critical parts of its uranium enrichment program against claims by Iran that progress can only be based on “the West’s” acceptance of Iran’s right to enrich uranium under the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and on the lifting of economic sanctions. The “success” of February’s negotiations was based on the apparent willingness of both parties to discuss these issues; but pundit pessimism about the prospects for this week’s negotiations stems from how little the United States appears willing to give Iran in exchange for anything.

Among “Western” analysts, there are two broad areas of discussion and disagreement: what are Iran’s nuclear intentions and capabilities; and whether economic sanctions are forcing the Iranian leadership towards modifying its nuclear program. This week, in the good/useful reading linked below, we have the ingredients for an interesting discussion on both Iran’s nuclear program and the effect of economic sanctions. In my view, the differences among
antiwar analysts about Iran’s nuclear program and the actual effect of the economic sanctions point to the need for the US antiwar movement to pay more attention to Iran and to some of the issues that serve as the basis for pro-war propaganda.

The political-military climate surrounding this week’s negotiations in Kazakhstan keeps getting worse. This is primarily due to the war in Syria. The stepped up shipments of weapons to the armed opposition, President Obama’s discussions with Israel (whatever they were), Secretary of State Kerry’s warnings to Iraq about Iranian overflights, the apparent rapprochement between Israel and Turkey, Israeli military action on its borders with Syria and Lebanon, and yesterday’s news that the United Nations is developing a post-Assad “peacekeeping” force all increase the probability of a regional war. And it is difficult to imagine how the regionalization of the war in Syria could fail to drag in Iran and unleash the military action against Iran that the United States and Israel have long had as “options on the table.”

Once again I would like to thank those who you who have forwarded this newsletter or linked it on your sites. Previous “issues” of the Iran War Weekly are posted at http://warisacrime.org/blog/46383. If you would like to receive the IWW mailings, please send me an email at fbrodhead@aol.com.

Best wishes,
Frank Brodhead

OVERVIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES

A Curate’s Egg (Good in Parts)
By Peter Jenkins, Lobe Log [March 31, 2013]

[Being British, former IAEA envoy Peter Jenkins assumes that we are familiar with the 1895 Punch cartoon that brought “curate’s egg” – meaning that (contrary to fact) something basically rotten has good parts nevertheless – into our common English language. I learned this factoid at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curate%27s_egg.]

---- Last week, while visiting Israel and Jordan, President Barak Obama publicly emphasised that there is still time to resolve the nuclear dispute without resorting to force and that this is his preference. For peaceniks everywhere, those were encouraging words. But, advertently or not, the President’s words also revealed two of the most perplexing aspects of his administration’s Iran policy: their insistence on making unique demands of Iran, and their reluctance to give weight to US intelligence findings. http://www.lobelog.com/a-curates-egg-good-in-parts/

Iranian People Caught in Crossfire of Dueling Messages

By Farideh Farhi, Inter Press Service [March 27, 2013]

---- This year, like the first year of Obama’s presidency, the two leaders’ public messages had added significance because of the positive signals broadcast by both sides after Iran and the
five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany met in Almaty, Kazakhstan in March. The second meeting is slotted to occur Apr. 6. Considering that the exchanged messages came in the midst of ongoing talks, a degree of softened language and the abandonment of threats was expected. In his first Norouz speech in 2009, when both sides were getting ready to embark on serious talks, Obama had said that his administration was committed to diplomacy and a process that “will not be advanced by threats” and is “honest and grounded in mutual respect”. This time, however, his message was laced with threats and promises of rewards if Iranian leaders behaved well, eliciting Khamenei’s disdainful response, and revealing yet again how intractable – and dangerous – the conflict between Iran and the United States has become.

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Obama and America’s “Imperial Temptation” in the Middle East
By Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett, Aljazeera [March 2013]

Following President Obama’s address to an audience of Israeli students in Jerusalem last week, progressive commentators in the United States hailed the speech as “a passionate appeal for peace” that “placed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict squarely back on his agenda.” But those intoxicated by Obama’s rhetoric will soon experience a painful hangover. For the President’s Israel speech and the rest of his Middle East trip were focused, first and foremost, on domestic politics here in the United States. And Obama’s Middle East strategy is marked by a growing discrepancy between the arrogance of America’s regional agenda and its declining capacity to realise this agenda.

NEGOTIATIONS ON IRAN’S NUCLEAR PROGRAM
‘Most substantive’ Iran nuclear talks to date, but narrow area of agreement’
By Laura Rozen, Al-Monitor [March 26, 2013]

Iranian nuclear experts are deeply engaged on the substance of a revised international proposal, and said they are considering suspending 20% enrichment for six months and converting their 20% stockpile to oxide for medical use at technical talks with six world powers held in Istanbul last week, diplomatic sources told Al-Monitor Tuesday. However, the Iranians raised numerous objections to other elements in a revised international proposal presented in Kazakhstan last month, a diplomatic source, speaking not for attribution, said Tuesday. Among them: suspending other operations at Fordo except for 20% enrichment, shipping out Tehran’s stockpile of 20% enriched fuel; as well as enhanced IAEA inspections.

US ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES
Our Myopic Approach to Iran
By Stephen M. Walt, Foreign Policy [March 26, 2013]

When historians of American foreign policy look back a few decades from now, they will shake their heads in wonder at the incompetence of the U.S. effort to deal with Iran. They will
be baffled that the United States spent years trying to convince Iran to give up its nuclear enrichment program by making repeated threats of war, passing Congressional resolutions demanding regime change, waging a covert action campaign against the clerical regime, and imposing ever harsher economic sanctions. They will spend a lot of time exploring why U.S. leaders mindlessly stuck to this approach and never noticed that it wasn't working at all. Even as the sanctions bit harder, Iran kept moving closer to a nuclear "break-out" capability. Indeed, some analysts now believe it already has one. [http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/03/26/our_myopic_approach_to_iran]


Stopping an Undetectable Iranian Bomb
By David Albright, et al., Wall St. Journal [March 26, 2013]

[FB – David Albright and his Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) often provide scientific cover for conservative critiques of Iran’s nuclear program. In this contribution, Albright et al. put forward arguments that support the Israeli position that Iran’s nuclear program must be stopped before it reaches “critical capability.” In contrast, President Obama has placed his “red line” at the production of an actual nuclear weapon, rather than simply achieving the theoretical ability to make one. Yet this “red line” often seems very thin, and the devil is in the details. Here is a good statement of the Neo-con case.]

---- Iran’s nuclear program dominated last week’s meeting between U.S. President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. A key challenge for both leaders: how to stop Iran’s rapid advance toward "critical capability." Critical capability means the point at which Iran could dash to produce enough weapons-grade uranium or separated plutonium for one bomb so quickly that the International Atomic Energy Agency or a Western intelligence service would be unable to detect the dash until it is over. Mr. Obama has implicitly threatened to use force, if necessary, to prevent Iran from "obtaining" nuclear weapons. But once Tehran is perched at critical capability, it could use the threat of an undetectable breakout to enjoy many of the strategic benefits of having a bomb without crossing Mr. Obama's red line. Once Iran has produced sufficient fissile material—weapons-grade uranium or separated plutonium—it will be much more difficult for the West to stop Iran from completing the process of actually building nuclear weapons. [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324789504578380801062046108.html]

False Choices on Iran
By Paul R. Pillar, The National Interest [March 31, 2013]

---- A well-recognized attribute of opinion polling is that the wording of questions heavily influences the results of a poll. Even experienced and reputable organizations without any apparent ax to grind nonetheless sometimes fall into sloppy wording that heavily and misleadingly skews the responses. This is especially apt to happen with topics encumbered by conventional wisdom that is widely accepted even if it may be erroneous. The Iranian nuclear program is one such topic. … The problem is not to be laid only at the feet of Pew or
of pollsters in general. The problem is a cloud of presumption that has made debate in the United States over Iran's nuclear activities one of the least informed debates among any that have gotten as much attention as this one has. http://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/paul-pillar/false-choices-iran-8293


IRAN ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Policy Implications of Iran's Fall From Favor in Arab and Muslim Public Opinion
By James Zogby, Huffington Post [March 30, 2013]

---- Iran's nuclear program was once strongly supported throughout the region by the general public, though not necessarily by their governments. Now it is a subject of concern in most countries. Just six years ago, most Arabs and Muslims were willing to defend Iran against international pressure, now they want the international community to do something to rein in Iran's ambitions. Sanctions against Iran, once strongly opposed, are now supported by a majority of Arabs and Muslims in most countries. While there is an uptick in support for military action against Iran, should it persist in its nuclear program, majorities in almost all countries remain opposed to this option. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-zogby/policy-implications-of-ir_b_2984632.html

Double-Digit Inflation Worsens in Iran
By Rick Gladstone, New York Times [April 1, 2013]

---- Iran’s double-digit inflation rate worsened for the sixth consecutive month in March, the government said on Monday, in what appeared to be an implicit acknowledgment that international sanctions linked to the disputed Iranian nuclear program are causing some economic harm. The government’s statistics office said the rate increased in March to an annualized 31.5 percent, compared with 30.2 percent in February and 26.4 percent a year earlier, the semiofficial Mehr News Agency reported. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/02/world/middleeast/irans-double-digit-inflation-worsens.html?ref=world

SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN

Why Sanctions On Iran Aren't Working
By Bijan Khajehpour, Reza Marashi, & Trita Parsi, National Iranian-American Council [March 26, 2013]

---- Sanctions have so far failed to affect the Iranian government’s nuclear policy and are unlikely to do so in the future given the perceptions and calculations of the Iranian elite, according to a new report by the National Iranian American Council (NIAC). “Never Give In and Never Give Up” [pdf] studies the impact of sanctions on Tehran’s nuclear calculus and identifies the factors that have enabled the Iranian government to sustain its policy, despite
mounting economic pressure. … The authors contend that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s narrative – which portrays the West as a brutal group out to “get” Iran and keep it dependent on foreign powers – continues to dominate the discourse within Iran’s political elite and guide its decision-making. In turn, private lobbying campaigns have tended to focus on securing domestic economic concessions rather pushing for nuclear concessions to the West. … It is highly unlikely that Iran will succumb to sanctions pressure at a time when Khamenei’s narrative remains unchallenged, key stakeholders are not visibly lobbying for policy shifts, and no proportionate sanctions relief is put on the negotiating table by Western powers, according to the report. http://www.niacouncil.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=9077


Sanctions, "Analysis", and the Never-Ending Circle of Propaganda --- From NIAC to Neo-Cons

By Scott Lucas, Enduring America [March 29, 2013]

---- Most of what passes in the US press and circles of influence as "analysis" of Iran is actually political posturing, trying to put forward self-interested opinion as the Truth. This is a story of how that "analysis", caught up in a false "either-or" of Iran --- it is either menacing, or it is oppressed by the "West"; it is either pursuing a Bomb, or it has no such intention; there will be regime change or a dominant regime which will never be changed --- leads us, again and again, to political dead-ends. … There's only this problem. Neither the report nor its supporters offer a shred of credible evidence for the central claim that the regime has triumphed --- within itself, and by carrying the popular support of the Iranian people --- through the Resistance Economy. No evidence is given to show that the Resistance Economy is more than a propaganda concept and that it has successfully been implemented. Here are four points why NIAC's report is propaganda rather than analysis, and an explanation of why this posturing over sanctions matters, with NIAC's stance only offering an inverted reflection of that of "neo-conservatives" on Iran. http://www.enduringamerica.com/home/2013/3/29/iran-special-sanctions-analysis-and-the-never-ending-circle.html

Gold exports from Turkey to Iran resume

From Reuters [March 29, 2013]

---- Despite tougher US sanctions, Turkey exported almost $120 million worth of gold to Iran in February, data showed, suggesting the two countries' trade of gold for natural gas has resumed despite tighter US sanctions, though at levels below last year's peaks. http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Turkey-gold-exports-to-Iran-resume-despite-sanctions-308145

MILITARY ACTION

Legal Experts: Stuxnet Attack on Iran Was Illegal ‘Act of Force’
By Kim Zetter, *Wired* [March 25, 2013]

---- A cyberattack that sabotaged Iran’s uranium enrichment program was an “act of force” and was likely illegal, according to research commissioned by a NATO defense center. Acts of force are prohibited under the United Nations charter, except when done in self-defense. The 20 experts who produced the study were unanimous that Stuxnet was an act of force, but were less clear about whether the cyber sabotage against Iran’s nuclear program constituted an “armed attack,” which would entitle Iran to use counterforce in self-defense. An armed attack constitutes a start of international hostilities under which the Geneva Convention’s laws of war would apply. [http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2013/03/stuxnet-act-of-force/](http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2013/03/stuxnet-act-of-force/)

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**Historians Against the War** is posting Frank Brodhead’s "Iran War Weekly," as a helpful resource for our members and friends. Frank earned a PhD in history at Princeton University and has co-authored several books on US foreign policy. He is a scholar and political activist who has worked with peace and social justice movements for many years. In 2010-2011 he produced the “Afghanistan War Weekly,” which was widely used by antiwar groups across the country.

**Iran War Weekly**

**May 26, 2013**

Hello All – While huge majorities of the US public oppose war with Iran or US intervention in Syria, Congress and the mainstream US media have stepped up the pressure for a more aggressive stance on both fronts. With these factors in mind, we might ask whether President Obama’s speech this week at the National Defense University – in which he tried to dispose of liberal pressures on his policies re: drones, Guantanamo, and “the war on terror” – should be read as a move away from a confrontation in the Middle East, or as an attempt to secure his liberal base before more intense confrontations with Iran and Syria.

Following a series of generally unfruitful meetings regarding Iran’s nuclear program, further diplomacy is now on pause until after Iran’s presidential election, which will take place on June 14th. This week Iran’s Guardian Council disqualified the two presidential aspirants who might have challenged the policies of Iran’s Supreme Leader and the ruling conservative circles; but the fact that the candidate who has emerged as favored to win has been Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator may be significant in the future.

Towards Iran, the US Congress has now done everything but declare war. In the House this week, a committee reported out a bill that moved toward a full trade embargo – or economic war – against Iran; while by a vote of 99 to 0 the Senate passed a “sense of the Senate” resolution essentially endorsing any military action Israel might take against Iran, and calling on the Obama administration to support whatever Israel does.

Leading media outlets in the United States are also pushing hard for a more aggressive policy towards Iran, perhaps increasingly so. Several articles linked below illustrate this; the media’s spinning of the latest report by the UN’s IAEA on Iran’s nuclear program is a model of news-as-propaganda. One reason for this may be the greater salience of Hezbollah, generally viewed in “the West” as a proxy for Iran, in the fighting in Syria. While Hezbollah’s role in the fighting is largely confined to areas of importance to Hezbollah (the Lebanon-Syrian border) and Shi’ism (a shrine desecrated earlier by Opposition forces), Hezbollah’s historic conflict with Israel and its designation by the United States (and perhaps soon by the EU) as a “terrorist” organization have added a new element to the internationalization of Syria’s civil war. As this weekend’s news suggests, the war is well on its way to spilling over into Lebanon.
Once again I would like to thank those who you who have forwarded this newsletter or linked it on your sites. This and previous “issues” of the Iran War Weekly are posted at http://warisacrime.org/blog/46383. If you would like to receive the IWW mailings, please send me an email at fbrodhead@aol.com.

Best wishes,

Frank Brodhead

THE IAEA REPORT ON IRAN’S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

The UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency released its quarterly report on Iran’s nuclear program this week. The report can be read at http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/IAEA_Iran_Safeguards_report__22May2013.pdf. The report included no surprises nor described any deviations from the lines of development suggested in previous IAEA reports. A useful summary/analysis can be read on the Arms Control Association website: http://armscontrolnow.org/2013/05/22/cliff-notes-on-the-may-2013-iaea-report-on-iran/#more-3461

Cliff Notes on the May 2013 IAEA Report on Iran

By Kelsey Davenport, et al., Arms Control Association [May 22, 2013]

---- The International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) May 2013 quarterly report on Iran’s nuclear program indicates that Tehran is continuing to move forward on its nuclear program, installing more advanced centrifuges and building-up its stockpiles of uranium enriched to 3.5 percent and 20 percent, and moving forward on construction of its heavy water reactor at Arak. The report findings underscore the urgent need to intensify negotiations with Tehran to resolve the political questions surrounding Iran’s nuclear program and to resolve the outstanding questions regarding the potential military dimensions of the program, but, at the same time, the findings reinforce earlier assessments that Iran remains years away from obtaining a deliverable nuclear arsenal.

Media Analysis

---- All this seems tame enough, but a closer look at how the IAEA report was covered in the mainstream media is instructive. For example, the New York Times story (by David E. Sanger and William J. Broad) was headlined “Iran is Seen Advancing Nuclear Bid.” What does this mean, “nuclear bid”? It certainly fits comfortably with the claim that Iran is making a “bid” for nuclear weapons; and the burden of the Sanger/Broad story measures the dry facts in the IAEA report with the milestones that would be passed if Iran were making nuclear weapons. So, for example, Iran continues to build its heavy-water nuclear plant at Arak, “a source of plutonium,” but the Times readers are not informed that Iran does not have, and is not building, a reprocessing plant that would be required to extract the plutonium from spent nuclear fuel. Similarly, Iran continues to enrich uranium to 20 percent U235, a level required for medical purposes, but (ominously) only a stones throw away from the 90 percent enrichment needed for a nuclear weapon. But the diabolical Iranians are converting their 20-percent uranium into metal oxide, useful for reactor fuel but not for a bomb; thus diabolically keeping its stock of 20 percent uranium gas below the level that could be further enriched to produce one nuclear bomb, an Israeli “red line” that would be used to justify a military attack against Iran. And (gasp) they have installed some 600 more advanced centrifuges, but (again, diabolically) have yet to bring them online. “Much Ado About Nothing,” by Sanger and Broad. A more balanced reading of the IAEA report might deduce that Iran is continuing to assert its right to develop a nuclear program, while making concessions to “Western” fears about nuclear weapons and taking steps to prevent the foreclosure of opportunities for continued negotiations.

At his website “Enduring America,” analyst Scott Lucas walks us through some of the key points in the report that are spinnable by those seeking to justify more aggressive action against Iran. His article, “Iran Analysis: Hype & Substance --- 3 Key Points on Latest IAEA Nuclear Report,” can be read at [http://www.enduringamerica.com/home/2013/5/23/iran-analysis-hype-substance-3-key-points-on-latest-iaea-nuc.html](http://www.enduringamerica.com/home/2013/5/23/iran-analysis-hype-substance-3-key-points-on-latest-iaea-nuc.html). Finally, an interesting Associate Press article was published Saturday that bears on the IAEA report itself. Written by George Jahn, who is frequently described by critics of US diplomacy towards Iran as a water carrier for US propaganda, the article states that two IAEA officials told Jahn that 80 percent of their “intelligence” about Iran’s nuclear program “comes from the United States and its allies.” Whether this is accurate of course is not known, but it suggests/Confirms that the IAEA reports need to be read with a critical eye. (The article can be found at [http://www.denverpost.com/nationworld/ci_23319960/u-n-nuclear-agencys-iran-probe-driven-by](http://www.denverpost.com/nationworld/ci_23319960/u-n-nuclear-agencys-iran-probe-driven-by).)

**US VIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES**

**U.S. Congress Moves Toward Full Trade Embargo on Iran**

By Jim Lobe, *Inter Press Service* [May 23 2013]

--- The U.S. Congress moved closer here Wednesday to imposing a full trade embargo against Iran and pledged its support to Israel if it felt compelled to attack Tehran’s nuclear programme in self-defence. The Senate voted 99-0 to adopt a resolution that urged President Barack Obama to fully enforce existing economic sanctions against Iran and to “provide diplomatic, military and economic support” to Israel “in its defense of its territory, people and existence”. Washington, it said, should support Israel “in accordance with United States law and the constitutional responsibility of Congress to authorize the use of military force” if Israel “is compelled to take military action in legitimate self-defense against Iran’s nuclear weapons program.” The measure also re-affirmed the official policy of the administration of President Barack Obama that it would take whatever action necessary to “prevent” Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. At the same time, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Republican-led House of Representatives unanimously approved new sanctions legislation that, if passed into law, would blacklist foreign countries or companies that fail to reduce their oil imports from Iran to virtually nil within 180 days. In perhaps its most controversial section, the bill also eliminates President Obama’s ability to waive most sanctions for national-interest or national-security reasons. [http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/05/u-s-congress-moves-toward-full-trade-embargo-on-iran/](http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/05/u-s-congress-moves-toward-full-trade-embargo-on-iran/)


(Video) Iran and American Foreign Policy: Where the US Went Wrong

With Flynt Leverett, Hillary Mann Leverett, and Noam Chomsky
[For those wanting to cut to the substantive chase, Hillary’s presentation starts 18:20 into the video, Flynt’s starts at 37:00, and Chomsky begins at 54:00, followed by Q&A with the audience.]
[http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/fa0b655aee607b9905c44572c7029f713245304c/private](http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/fa0b655aee607b9905c44572c7029f713245304c/private)

On Ambassador Sherman’s Testimony on Iran

By Peter Jenkins, *Lobe Log* [May 21, 2013]

[Peter Jenkins is a former UK representative to the IAEA.]

--- Listening, on 15 May, to the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on US policy towards Iran put me in mind of the inscription Dante imagined over the entrance to Hell: “Abandon hope all you who enter here”. There seemed no notion among members of the committee that territories beyond the borders of the United States of America are not subject to US jurisdiction – still less that reasoned persuasion and reciprocity can be more
effective tools for achieving US foreign policy goals than sanctions (how the good Congressmen love sanctions!) and the infliction of pain. ... Still, it is hard to avoid the thought that the administration could have made more of this opportunity. Ambassador Sherman’s opening statement contained no reference to the US intelligence community's confidence that Iran’s leaders have not taken a decision to acquire nuclear weapons. Instead, it referred to “Iran’s nuclear weapon ambitions” and to the need for Iran to “change course”, which the congressmen could be forgiven for taking as confirmation of their chairman’s opening assertion that Iran is trying to build a nuclear arsenal. … Most Europeans yearn for the objectivity and ethical agnosticism that underlay the US opening to China, détente with the Soviet Union, and the final flurry of US/USSR agreements heralding the end of the Cold War. That sort of objectivity should come naturally, one might think, when the adversary is Iran, a state so very much weaker than the US. Alas, the opposite seems to be the case!


IRANIAN VIEWS AND PERSPECTIVES

The Problem is the Same: Economy
By Ali Dadpay, Iran Opinion [May 21, 2013]

---- As Iran’s presidential election approaches an increasing number of analysts and observers comment on the state of Iran’s economy. The last reports indicate that some segments of Iran’s labor force are experiencing high unemployment rate while the economy is experiencing an increasing inflation rate. The next president faces economic challenges some might consider unprecedented. Last month Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) announced employment data for the last Iranian calendar year from April 2012 to March 2013, reporting the unemployment rate to be at 12.2 percent, which is almost at the same level with the unemployment rate in the preceding 12 months. According to this report, Iranian youth experience higher than average unemployment rate, 28% for males aged 20 to 24 years old. http://iranopinion.com/node/49

What Message New US Sanctions Are Meant to Convey to Iran’s Next President?
By Ali Omidi, Iran Review [May 23, 2013]

---- The United States House of Representatives’ Committee on Foreign Relations passed a bill on May 22, 2013, which has paved the way for the US President Barak Obama to enforce new sanctions against all companies conducting transactions with Iran regardless of the type of their transactions and the size of those companies. The bill was also meant to ratchet up the punishments that have been already considered for the violation of the existing sanctions. The main goal of the new bill, which should be passed on the floor of the House of Representatives as well as by the US Senate before it can be signed into law by Barak Obama, is further reduction of Iran’s crude oil sales and enforcing more limitations for transactions with Iran’s economic and private sectors. On the other hand, the US Senate passed a nonbinding resolution on the same day which put renewed emphasis on the US support for a possible Israeli attack against Iran’s nuclear facilities. The resolution was passed through 99 ayes with no opposition. The text of the resolution has noted that the United States is committed to security and survival of Israel and considers it part of its “vital interests.” http://www.campaigniran.org/casmii/index.php?q=node/13245

IRAN’S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

---- Iran’s presidential election will take place on June 14. Since 1991 Iran’s 12-member Guardian Council has approved or disapproved candidates for election. Last Tuesday the Guardian Council approved eight presidential candidates from the more than 600 who registered to run. The most significant of their “disapprovals” were former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and current president Ahmadinejad’s protégé Esfandiar Mashaei. While Mashaei’s disqualification was no surprise, the rejection of Rafsanjani was a political shock. Though he had been somewhat associated with the Reform camp following the 2009 presidential election and post-election protests, he did not appear to be so out of step with the ruling clerical circles as to disallow his candidacy. But, it turns out, he was.

With one or two unimportant exceptions, the remaining presidential candidates are seen as close to the views of
Supreme Leader Khameinei, with little independent following or popular appeal. Reform currents, defeated in the 2009 presidential election and the post-election political repression, appear to be divided between boycotting the election or choosing a Lesser Evil. With Rafsanjani now unable to assume this role, a "reformist" presence in the campaign appears unlikely. But, as many commentators have pointed out, the only certainty about Iran’s elections is that of surprise. - FB

**Video** Iranian Politics: Who is pulling the strings?

From Aljazeera [Inside Story] [May 23, 2013] – 25 minutes

--- As two senior politicians are banned from running in the presidential race, we ask if the outcome is now predictable. Inside Story discusses with guests; Sadegh Zibakalam, Ghanbar Naderi and Kelly Golnoush Niknejad. [http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2013/05/201352382122119842.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2013/05/201352382122119842.html)

Rafsanjani Shut Out of Iran's Presidential Race

By Farideh Farhi, *Inter Press Service* [May 22 2013]

--- With the disqualification of former president and current chair of the Expediency Council Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani by a vetting body, the Guardian Council, Iran’s presidential campaign is opening with many in the country in a state of shock. Although the eight qualified candidates offer somewhat of a choice given their different approaches to the economy and foreign policy, the disqualification of Rafsanjani has once again raised the spectre that the conservative establishment intends to manipulate the electoral process in such a way that only a conservative candidate will win when voters cast their ballots Jun. 14. The slate of approved candidates includes two individuals — former nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani and former first vice president Mohammadreza Aref — who hold mostly similar views to Rafsanjani. In fact, both had said that they would withdraw if Rafsanjani’s candidacy was approved. But neither is as well known as the former president and they will now have to compete against each other in attracting likeminded voters. [http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/05/rafsanjani-shut-out-of-irans-presidential-race/](http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/05/rafsanjani-shut-out-of-irans-presidential-race/)


**SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN**

U.S. House committee approves measure to back Israel in case of nuclear Iran attack

From Reuters [May 23, 2013]

--- A U.S. House of Representatives committee approved legislation on Wednesday seeking to impose tighter sanctions on Iran - and affirm its support for Israeli self defense - in the latest congressional effort to slow development of the Islamic Republic's disputed nuclear program. The "Nuclear Iran Prevention Act of 2013" passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee by a unanimous voice vote and is expected to easily pass the full 435-member chamber, where it already has about 340 co-sponsors. A vote by the Republican-controlled House is likely within the coming weeks. The measure seeks to cut Iran's oil exports to less than 500,000 barrels a day, limit Tehran's access to foreign currency and expand the list of blacklisted sectors of Iran's economy. Sponsors called it the strongest sanctions package ever against Iran's nuclear program. [http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/u-s-house-committee-approves-measure-to-back-israel-in-case-of-nuclear-iran-attack-1.525491](http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/u-s-house-committee-approves-measure-to-back-israel-in-case-of-nuclear-iran-attack-1.525491)

Sanctions Are No Medicine for the Iran-U.S. Standoff

Bu Sara Afzal, *Huffington Post* [May 20, 2013]

--- Due to Iran's nuclear development program, in 2012 a new round of multilateral sanctions more directly targeted Iran's economy. Now, foreign banks are prohibited from financially dealing with Iran's main banks,
including Central Bank of Iran and Bank Tejarat. Since the majority of Iran’s medical industry is dependent on foreign imports, Iran is unable to produce self-sustaining amounts of medicine and medical equipment. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sara-afzal/sanctions-are-no-medicine_b_3307681.html]

[See also Jim Lobe, “U.S. Congress Moves Toward Full Trade Embargo on Iran,” under US Views and Perspectives, above.]

[See also Ali Amidi, “What Message New US Sanctions Are Meant to Convey to Iran’s Next President?” under Iranian Views and Perspectives, above.]

ISRAELI VIEWS

Iran’s nuclear designs are the greater Middle East threat
[Michael Oren is Israel’s ambassador to the United States.] [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/irans-nuclear-designs-are-the-greater-middle-east-threat/2013/05/24/8fe22228-c490-11e2-914f-a7aba60512a7_story.html]

CIVIL WAR/INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

---- As we “go to press” (Sunday), two breaking news stories may have a major impact on the shape of Syria’s civil war. The first reflects the difficulties of the many-part “Syrian opposition,” now in its fourth day of meetings in Istanbul. The meeting is tasked (largely by the United States) to expand its membership; i.e. to include additional liberal and secular forces. It is also called upon to replace its president, and additionally to determine its policy toward the upcoming Geneva II peace conference and to choose a delegation for the conference. In the best of circumstances, this would be a daunting agenda, and it remains to be seen whether these goals can be accomplished. While the Russians have succeeded in getting the agreement of the Assad people to attend Geneva II (mid-June), there are strong voices among the Opposition calling for the rejection of meddling by “outside forces” (“the West”), while other voices are trying to square the circle by proposing to “negotiate” with the Assad people only about the steps leading to his departure, but not to consider power-sharing arrangements or a ceasefire.

The second story thread reflects the intense media focus on the suddenly enlarged role of Lebanon’s Hezbollah in the fighting inside Syria but along the Lebanon border, and the spillover of the fighting into Lebanon itself. If, as now appears likely, the Syrian government forces succeed in pushing the Syrian opposition out of the area bordering Lebanon, this may be seen as a “game changer” by both the Israelis and the Obama administration, with potentially serious consequences for a wider war. In any case, the descent of Lebanon into civil war now seems highly likely.

The good/useful reading linked below surveys both of these topic areas, as well as useful articles on chemical weapons in Syria, the question of Iranian troops supporting government forces, and some valiant attempts to decipher the policies and strategies of the United States and Israel. - FB

Overview and Perspectives

Stay Out of Syria!
By David Bromwich, New York Review of Books [May 2013]
---- But the untold story of Syria concerns something beyond the atrocities on both sides. It has also to do with
the sinews of war—the financial motive and muscle that keeps it going. A *Financial Times* article by Roula Khalaf and Abigail Fielding-Smith on May 17, “How Qatar Seized Control of the Syrian Revolution,” quoted persons close to the Qatari government who estimate that $3 billion has thus far been spent bankrolling the rebel groups. Sources inside Syria had guessed only a third of that. But the money must keep coming, since Qatar is buying up the loyalty of networks of rebel forces as an investment in the divided Syria of the future. [http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/jun/20/stay-out-syria/](http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/jun/20/stay-out-syria/)

*(Video)* ‘Syrian Conflict Is A War Targeting Iran’


[http://www.zcommunications.org/syrian-conflict-is-a-war-targeting-iran-by-tariq-ali](http://www.zcommunications.org/syrian-conflict-is-a-war-targeting-iran-by-tariq-ali)

**The “Geneva II” Peace Conference**

*(Video)* A new way forward for Syria’s opposition?

From *Aljazeera* [Inside Syria] [May 26, 2013] – 25 minutes

---- We look at the implications of a new proposal that would allow President Bashar al-Assad and his allies to leave Syria. … Syrian opposition leaders are holding talks in Istanbul, where they will try to expand the group, elect a new president and discuss whether to attend an international conference aimed at resolving the conflict at home. [http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidesyria/2013/05/201352672941379435.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidesyria/2013/05/201352672941379435.html)


**US Policy/Strategy in Syria**

What is the U.S. Really Doing in Syria?

By Stephen M. Walt, *Foreign Policy* [May 22, 2013]

---- Permit me to indulge today in a bit of speculation, for which I don't have a lot of hard evidence. As I read [this article](http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/22/what_is_the_us_really_doing_in_syria) yesterday on Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war, I began to wonder whether U.S. involvement in that conflict isn't more substantial than I have previously thought. And then I did a bit of web surfing and found [this story](http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/u-s-willing-to-keep-assad-in-the-picture-to-avoid-threat-of-all-out-mideast-war.premium-1.525417?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.216%2C2.295%2C), which seemed to confirm my suspicions. … I don't like not knowing what my government is doing, allegedly to make me safer or to advance someone's idea of the "national interest." And if you're an American, neither should you. If the United States is now orchestrating a lot of arms shipments, trying to pick winners among the opposition, sending intelligence information to various militias, and generally meddling in a very complicated and uncertain conflict, don't you think the president owes us a more complete account of what America's public servants are or are not doing, and why?

[http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/22/what_is_the_us_really_doing_in_syria](http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/22/what_is_the_us_really_doing_in_syria)

**Israeli Policies and Strategies**

**Israel Finding Itself Drawn Into Syria’s Turmoil**


---- For more than two years, Israeli leaders have insisted they had no intention of intervening in the civil war raging in neighboring Syria, but they vowed to stop sophisticated weapons from being transferred to Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia group, and to respond to intentional fire into their territory. Now, having followed through with a pair of airstrikes on weapons shipments this month and, on Tuesday, the destruction of a Syrian Army position, Israelis are asking what their options are, as if they feel it has become impossible to avoid deeper involvement. For Israel, deeper involvement in the Syrian conflict could lead to an unwanted result: hastening the fall of the Assad government, leaving areas close to the cease-fire line in the hands of radical jihadi groups. It could also have dire diplomatic consequences for Israel’s complicated relationship with Russia. And many here believe Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants to conserve his military resources and public support for the continuing possibility of an attack on the Iranian nuclear program. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/23/world/middleeast/israel-is-drawn-into-syrias-turmoil.html?ref=world](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/23/world/middleeast/israel-is-drawn-into-syrias-turmoil.html?ref=world)


**Iranian Troops Fighting in Syria?**

**State Dept Official Says Iranian Troops of Fighting in Syria**

By Jason Ditz, *Antiwar.com* [May 21, 2013]


**Iranian soldiers fighting for Assad in Syria, says State Department official**

By Anne Gearan, *Washington Post* [May 21, 2013]

---- Iran has sent soldiers to Syria to fight alongside forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and those of the Lebanon-based Hezbollah militia, a senior State Department official said Tuesday. An unknown number of Iranians are fighting in Syria, the official said, citing accounts from members of the opposition Free Syrian Army, which is backed by the United States. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview a strategy session that Secretary of State John F. Kerry is to hold Wednesday with key supporters of the Syrian opposition. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/state-dept-official-iranian-soldiers-are-fighting-for-assad-in-syria/2013/05/21/a7c3f4ce-c23e-11e2-914f-a7aba60512a7_print.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/state-dept-official-iranian-soldiers-are-fighting-for-assad-in-syria/2013/05/21/a7c3f4ce-c23e-11e2-914f-a7aba60512a7_print.html)


STOP THE ATTACK ON IRAN. Iran presents no threat to the US or Israel. Threatening Iran with bombs or embargo violates the UN Charter. No peacemaking is as important as opposing
and trying to prevent unjust war. Speak up, write, call, donate, don’t give up on reason and diplomacy; don’t let the fear/warmongers control us. --Dick

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**END IRAN NEWSLETTER #23**

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Dick Bennett

**Newsletters**

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