

Who is Afraid of the Iranian Bomb?

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IHATE SELF-EVIDENT truths. Ideals may be self-evident. Political statements are not. When I hear about a self-evident political truth, I immediately doubt it.

The most self-evident political truth at this moment concerns Iran. Iran is our deadly enemy. Iran wants to destroy us. We must destroy its capabilities first.

Since this is self-evident, the anti-nuclear agreement signed between Iran and the five Security Council members (plus Germany) is terrible. Just terrible. We should have ordered the Americans long ago to bomb Iran to smithereens. In the unlikely event that they would have disobeyed us, we should have nuclear-bombed Iran ourselves, before their crazy fanatical leaders have the opportunity to annihilate us first.

All these are self-evident truths. To my mind, all of them are utter nonsense. There is nothing self-evident about them. Indeed, they have no logical basis at all. They lack any geopolitical, historical or factual foundation.

NAPOLEON ONCE said that if one wants to understand the behavior of a country, one has to look at the map.

Geography is more important than ideology, however fanatical. Ideologies change with time. Geography doesn't. The most fanatically ideological country in the 20th century was the Soviet Union. It abhorred its predecessor, Czarist Russia. It would have abhorred its successor, Putin's Russia. But lo and behold—the Czars, Stalin and Putin conduct more or less the same foreign policy. Karl Marx must be turning in his grave.

When the Biblical Israelite people was born, Persia was already a civilized country. King Cyrus of Persia sent the “Jews” to Jerusalem and founded what can be called the “Jewish people”. He is remembered in Jewish history as a great benefactor.

When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, David Ben-Gurion saw in Iran a natural ally. It may now sound strange, but not so long ago Iran was indeed the most pro-Israeli country in the Middle East.

Ben-Gurion was an out-and-out realist. Since he had no intention whatsoever to make peace with the Arabs, a peace which would have prevented the original small State of Israel expanding without boundaries, he looked

for allies beyond the Arab world.

Looking at the map (yes, he believed in the map) he saw that the Muslim Arabs were surrounded by a number of non-Arab or non-Muslim entities. There were the Maronite Christians in Lebanon (not Muslims), the Turks (Muslims, but not Arabs), the Kurds (Muslims but not Arabs), Iran (Muslim, but not Arab), Ethiopia (neither Muslim nor Arab) and more.

Seeing this, Ben-Gurion devised a grand plan: a “partnership of the periphery”, an alliance of all these entities surrounding the Arab world and which felt threatened by the emerging pan-Arab nationalism of Gamal Abd-al-Nasser and other Sunni-Muslim-Arab states.

ONE OF the greatest enthusiasts for this idea was the Shah of Iran, who became Israel's most ardent friend.

The “King of Kings” was a brutal dictator, hated by most of his people. But for many Israelis, Iran became a second home. Tehran became a Mecca for Israeli businessmen, some of whom became very rich. Experts of the Israeli Security Service, called Shabak (Hebrew initials of General Security Service) trained the Shah's detested secret police, called Savak.

High-ranking Israeli army commanders traveled freely through Iran to Iraqi Kurdistan, where they trained the Kurdish Peshmerga forces in their fight against Saddam Hussein's regime. (The Shah, of course, did not dream of giving freedom to his own Kurdish minority.)

This paradise came to a sudden end when the Shah made a deal with Saddam Hussein, in order to save his throne. To no avail. Radical Shiite clerics, who were very popular, overthrew the Shah and established the Shiite Islamic republic. Israel was out.

By the way, another element of the “Periphery” broke away too. In 1954 Ben-Gurion and his army chief, Moshe Dayan, hatched a plan to attack Lebanon and establish a pro-Israeli Maronite dictator there. The then Prime Minister, Moshe Sharet, who knew something about the Arab world, nixed this adventure, which he considered stupid. Thirty years later Ariel Sharon, another ignoramus, implemented the same plan, with disastrous results.

In 1982, the Israeli army invaded Lebanon. It duly installed a Maronite dictator, Basheer Jumayil, who signed a peace agreement with Israel and was soon assassinated.

The Shiites, who populate the South of Lebanon, welcomed the Israeli army enthusiastically, believing that it would help them against the Sunni Muslims and withdraw. I was an eye-witness: driving alone in my civilian car from Metullah in Israel to Sidon on the Lebanon coast, I passed several Shiite villages and could hardly extricate myself (physically) from the embraces of the inhabitants.

However, when the Shiites realized that the Israelis had no intention of leaving, they started a guerrilla war against them. Thus Hezbollah was born and became one of Israel's most effective enemies—and an ally of the Shiite regime in Iran.

BUT IS the Shiite Iranian regime such a deadly enemy of Israel? I rather doubt it.

Indeed, when the religious fanaticism of the new regime in Iran was at its height, a curious business occurred. It became known as “Iran-Contra” affair. Some conservatives in Washington DC wanted to arm rightist insurgents in leftist Nicaragua. American laws prevented them from doing so openly, so they turned to—who else?—Israel.

Israel sold arms to the Iranian Ayatollahs (yes, indeed!) and gave the proceeds to our Washington friends, who transferred them illegally to the Nicaraguan rightist terrorists, called “Contras”.

The moral of the story: when it served their practical purposes, the Ayatollahs had no qualms at all about making deals with Israel, the “little Satan”.

Iran needed the weapons Israel sent them because they were fighting a war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It was not the first one. For many centuries, Iraq served the Arab world as a bulwark against Iran. Iraq has a large Shiite population, but the Iraqi Shiites were Arabs and had no real sympathy for their fellow-Shiites in Iran. They still have little.

Israel helped Iran in that war because it feared Saddam Hussein. Therefore, Israel helped to convince the US to invade Iraq. The invasion was highly successful: Iraq was destroyed, and the historic bulwark against Iran disappeared. So it was Israel which helped to remove the

main obstacle to Iran's hegemony over the Middle East.

Sounds crazy? Is crazy. Ben-Gurion's grand design has been stood on its head. At present, the “periphery” of Lebanon and Iran, supported by Turkey, is our mortal enemy, and the Sunni bloc of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Egypt are our open or half-secret allies.

HERE I hear the impatient reader shout: “Cut the bullshit, what about the nuclear danger? What about the mad ayatollahs obtaining atomic bombs and annihilating us?”

Well, I am not afraid. Even if Iran obtains nuclear bombs, I shall sleep well.

Why, for God's (or Allah's) sake? Because Israel is well provided with nuclear weapons and a second-strike capability.

Bombing Israel would mean the annihilation of Iran, the multi-millennial civilization, the proud heritage of innumerable philosophers, artists, poets and scientists.¹

The current Iranian rulers may be fanatics (I doubt it) but they are not suicidal. There is not a single indication in that direction. On the contrary, they seem eminently practical people.

So why do they clamor against Israel? Because their aim is to become the dominant force in the Muslim world, and cursing Israel is the obvious way. As long as Israel does not make peace with the Palestinians, the Arab and Muslim masses everywhere hate Israel. Iran's current leaders are very good at cursing the Little Satan.

Experts report that Islam has recently been losing strength as the main force in Iran, while Iranian nationalism has been gaining. The cult of Cyrus, who preceded Muhammad by more than 1200 years, is gaining ground.

SINCE THE nuclear bomb was invented, no nuclear-armed country has ever been attacked. Attacking a nuclear-armed country simply means suicide. Even the mighty USA (the “Big Satan”) does not dare to attack little North Korea, whose endeavor to obtain a nuclear strike force is far from irrational.

So I shall sleep soundly even if Iran goes nuclear. Though perhaps with one eye half open.

¹The very word “algorithm” is derived from the name of the Persian mathematician al-Khwarizmi.