



Western Double Standards: Israel vs. Iran

by Senussi Bsaikri

MEM 
MIDDLE EAST M NITOR

Briefing Paper

November 2009

www.middleeastmonitor.org.uk

Background

The beginning of the 21st century witnessed the emergence of what has come to be known as the ‘Iranian Nuclear Crisis’. It followed the unearthing of Tehran’s nuclear aspirations when, in August 2002, an exiled Iranian opposition group named the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) revealed classified details about Iran’s nuclear program, including information about uranium enrichment and production of the chemical compound Arak heavy-water.

In 2003, European powers entered into nuclear negotiations with Iran, however, these soon ended as Iran refused to bring its program to a halt or to open its nuclear sites to international inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Subsequently, Washington spearheaded a campaign against Iran and there appeared to be conformity between American and Israeli stances with regard to methods of dealing with the issue and in particular, the proposed use of force. Between 2004 and 2007, the Security Council issued three new resolutions. However, since Obama’s election, the American position on Iran has changed slightly and in February this year, he called Iran toward a ‘sincere partnership based on mutual respect.’

In response, Iran expressed a readiness to respond to Obama’s offer but nevertheless demanded the US administration take ‘concrete steps’ toward their stated goals. Indeed in early September 2009, a package of proposals was presented to Iran by Western countries and was described by Iran as a ‘new



chance for talks and cooperation'. Then, in October, Iran announced news of a second uranium enrichment site under construction and itself called for inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency. A new series of negotiations are expected to begin between Iran and the six countries involved during the second half of October.

The Stand points of Countries Involved in the Iranian Nuclear Issue

The American stance toward Iran is the toughest of all and has vacillated not over its principal position toward Iran's nuclear weapons, but rather over the method of dealing with the issue; whether the US should resort to a military strike as a means of resolving the dispute or whether it should employ diplomacy coupled with economic restrictions. In principle, the European negotiating parties object to the use of military action and welcome the idea of economic restrictions, even considering them the best option, but also want to hold onto diplomacy in trying to reach a solution.

With regard to America's use of military action and the tightening of economic sanctions, Russia and China's positions have remained very much constant over the last few years. However, recently there has been a relative shift in the official Russian position on adopting a tougher stance on Iran. Some observers attribute this change to the US decision to drop the ballistic missiles project in Poland and



Czechoslovakia while others ascribe it to Tehran demanding amendments to the Russian uranium enrichment proposal in Russia. The Chinese position remains static and resists putting pressure on Iran in the belief that they will fail to convince it of abandoning its nuclear aspirations.

The Tel Aviv Stand Point on the Iranian Nuclear Program

Evidence shows that Israeli interests were indeed the real motive behind the Western conflict with Iran regarding its nuclear aspirations. Iran has always wanted and appreciated its relations with the West based on mutual respect; trade between Europe and Iran reflects strong affiliations and shared interest. Nevertheless, due to the status of Israel in Europe, the Iranian leader's attitude toward Israel appears to be at the crux of tensions between Iran and Western countries.

Jonathan Cook, author of "Israel and the Clash of Civilisations", argues that at the core of Israel's fear of Iran developing nuclear weapons is the fear that Iran could influence the peace process in such a way that would serve Palestinian interests and perhaps put an end to Israel's control of the occupied territories. Cook believes that Israel's exaggeration of the Iranian threat and its warmongering against Iran are largely based on this assumption. He also believes that the US understands and agrees with Tel Aviv, that it even shares its concerns and attitudes and that this is the reason why it has refused to hold talks with Iran.



Western Double Standards

The tough Western stance towards Iran is linked to several issues but nevertheless centres on preventing Iran from developing its nuclear capabilities, even though it asserts that they are exclusively for peaceful purposes. Irrespective of the truthfulness of these claims; whether Iran has a hidden agenda and is seeking the capability to produce a nuclear bomb and ultimately to enter the nuclear weaponry market, and even with the presumption of the Western claim that Iran is planning to accomplish a nuclear military program, the West's double standards when it comes to the sensitive issue of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons are glaringly obvious.

Besides, the overstated Iranian nuclear threat to world peace is but an assumption that could turn out to be true just as easily as it could turn out to be false and invalid. Particularly when grave and concrete threats are overlooked; the policy of double standards allows the disregard of existent obstacles and threats highlighted by international organizations and based on substantial evidence and testimonies. As such, the probability of Iran possessing nuclear weapons has been magnified. It goes without saying that the state of Israel, for instance, does possess bombs and nuclear rockets in the very same region.



Why Does the West Object to Iran Possessing Nuclear Capabilities?

On the one hand, the West's stated objection to Iran's nuclear program is based on the fact that the West does not trust Iranian intentions; it does not accept Iran's claimed need for nuclear energy as it possesses huge oil reserves. On the other hand, the West shows concern over the possibility that nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of extremists within the Iranian regime and therefore become a direct threat to Western countries. The Western assumption is based on the weakness of the regime and the fragility of Iran's embryonic democracy, which means that power, may fall into the hands of Western and Israeli enemies inside Iran. The West does not recognize Iran's democratic, transparent and accountable framework for the presidential election process; it considers that Iran is undemocratic and insists that it is on a deviant path and thus a threat to global peace and security.

The Israeli Nuclear Program

In December 2006, Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stated: "can you talk about equality, if they (the Iranians) are aspiring to have nuclear weapons like America, France, Israel and Russia?" This was the first public statement made by an Israeli official in which it was admitted that Israel possesses a nuclear arsenal. The statement came as he warned of the threat posed by Iran seeking to possess nuclear artillery. This statement, it was said, was a "real slip of tongue by Olmert"; a statement he then withdrew claiming his words were misinterpreted.



Everyone knows Israel did not sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), that it refuses to disclose its nuclear program and that it will not allow the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) onto its nuclear sites. Israel did not sign up to, and flouts the NPT (1968). It did not adopt the additional protocols concluded between states and the IAEA and adopted by its Board of Governors in 1972 regarding the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of bacteriological (biological) weapons. Also, Israel did not sign up to the 2002 international treaty against the spread of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction and did not ratify the treaty for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Israel's Nuclear Arsenal

- German newspapers published in 1957 report on German-Israeli nuclear co-operation.
- In 1958, the BBC announced that it possessed evidence that Britain sold Israel 20 tons of heavy water, which allowed Israel to start up its nuclear production plant at Dimona.
- In 1968, Belgium announced it sold 200 metric tons of uranium to Israel.
- In 1986, a dissident Israeli scientist and expert on the Dimona nuclear complex, Mordechai Vanunu, revealed substantial information about Dimona backed by evidence (detailed photos) to the Sunday Times.
- In 1987, the Norwegian government announced that Israel had denied it a request to inspect the 20 tons of heavy water it had sold to Israel in the late fifties (1959).



- In September 1992, German Intelligence was quoted in the press as estimating that 40 Soviet nuclear scientists had immigrated to Israel since 1989 as part of waves of Jewish emigrants and had engaged in the Israeli nuclear program.
- In 1979 US satellites detected a double humped signal that corresponded with a double flash. Subsequent data confirmed that a nuclear detonation had occurred. The signal detected came from a remote region of the world, the Indian Ocean, and raised the possibility that South Africa or Israel, or the two in collaboration had conducted a covert test. Diplomatic pressure caused the South Africans to deny any such action.
- The Sunday Times, which lifted the lid of Israel's nuclear weapons, spent extensive time verifying Vanunu's story with leading experts in the nuclear field. Stunning revelations in 1986 about the secrets of Israel's large and sophisticated nuclear arsenal indicate that Israel possess between 100 and 200 nuclear warheads.
- In 1990, The American Intelligence Agency (CIA) placed Israel's nuclear arsenal at 75 to 130 nuclear warheads.

The West Provides Full Assistance to Israel's Nuclear Development Program

Available information highlights the fact that Israel relies on Western technology and support in the development of its nuclear capabilities.

Israel enjoys France's full support. This began in 1949 when an official in the French Nuclear Energy Agency visited Israel. It was then reinforced by the French nuclear physicist Francis Perrin's invitation to Israeli researchers to visit France and inaugurate scientific co-operation in the nuclear field. Last but not least has



been an agreement signed between France and Israel to process and enrich uranium and for pressurising heavy water reactors.

This was followed, between 1953 and 1955, by an Israeli-American agreement that helped Israel build a nuclear reactor west of the Eritrean port town of Assab. In 1957, French-Israeli nuclear collaboration resulted in the French covertly constructing the Dimona nuclear reactor situated at Naqab in the Negev desert. Countries such as Germany, Britain, Norway, Belgium and South Africa all provided Israel with the necessary ingredients for the production of a nuclear bomb.

Is Iran a Bigger Threat than Israel to World Peace and Security?

History affirms that over the past four decades, Iran has not been involved in any wars save for its war with Iraq during the eighties and substantial amounts of evidence indicate that Iran did not initiate aggression. As for Israel, international organisations have classified it as one of the most aggressive countries and demanded its withdrawal from Palestinian land. Israel continues to defy the international community by rejecting all resolutions related to Palestine. Its history, since its establishment as a state in the late forties, has been characterised by wars aimed at consolidating its occupation of Palestine and maintaining its control over the land it has annexed over the decades. Israel continually initiates hostilities and aggression as was seen during its last two wars in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.



Iran has not employed its military capabilities in attacking others or frightening and killing civilians, whereas Israel has committed numerous crimes and massacres documented by the reports of international human rights organizations world wide.

The recently published Goldstone report that illustrates the patterns of Israeli violations during the December-January assault on Gaza, accuses Israel of committing war crimes. It condemns the use, by the Israeli army, of weapons which are prohibited internationally; of the deliberate targeting of civilians and their use as human shields during raids into the alleged hiding places of wanted Palestinian fighters. The report accuses Israel of targeting civilian homes and buildings including hospitals, schools and mosques and highlights the fact that Palestinian fighters did not use such places as bases for carrying out attacks on Israeli military forces. The report implies that Israel also deliberately bombed food and medicine in a way that reveals Israel's intention to hinder the provision of humanitarian aid and basic food commodities to 1.5 million Gazan civilians trying to survive under siege. The report of the UN fact-finding Mission condemns Israel's tightened restrictions on the passage of medicine and food items and all necessary supplies to and from Gaza, and considers these practices a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention ratified by Israel.



The lands annexed by Iran, such as Tanabe Isles of which the State of the United Arab Emirates claims ownership, are lands subject to conflict and have not been categorized by a respected international organization as lands occupied by Iran. This is not a unique case in the Arab region as there have been similar conflicts among the Gulf States such as between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, between Saudi Arabia and Qatar and between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. As for Israel, UN resolutions 242 and 338 classify it as the illegal occupying power of Arab lands in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon since 1967.

Europeans Believe Israel to be the Biggest Threat to World Peace

Opinion polls published in 2003 by the most-read Spanish newspaper, El Pais, and which included thousands of participants from Europe, revealed that Israel constitutes the biggest threat to World Peace. About 60% of the participants believed Israel to be a bigger threat than North Korea, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Researchers and observers of Middle Eastern affairs go even further and say that Israel is the only power to be held responsible for the aggravation of the armaments race in the region. Juan Cole, President of the Global Americana Institute, states that Saddam Hussein sought to build a nuclear bomb only because Israel possesses it and this is also the case with Iran. Iran has serious concerns over the Israeli nuclear bomb, as does Saudi Arabia and Egypt who are all exasperated at their geo-strategic helplessness in the face of Israeli nukes and in addition to the fact that Israel is a hegemonic state that, according to the international community and international law, occupies lands by means of force. Israel possesses nuclear capabilities and constitutes a threat to World Peace.



Therefore, it is hard to persuade a country that is not on good terms with Israel, and has interests in the region, to stand by and watch the development of Israeli nuclear capability and do nothing. Such logic contradicts all theories explaining state behaviour and policies in international relations.

The Essence of the Crisis between Iran and the West

At the core of this crisis is the continuation of the West's policy of double standards unveiled before the public at large. It has become something akin to fuel for nourishing hesperophobia (fear or hatred of the West) and provides an excuse for those parties intent on the confrontation between the Muslim world and the West continuing.

The West's Double standards constitute a major stimulus for the rejection by many parties, such as Iran, of international resolutions; the underestimation of international law especially given that this latter is designed and tailored by the same parties responsible for the current crisis affecting the whole region since it is they who adopt conflicting criteria in dealing with sensitive issues like the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

On the Iranian side, Western injustice vis-à-vis its nuclear program is a unifying factor among all Iranian elite, including reformists led by the presidential candidate in the recent elections Mousavi, who opposes the state's political orientations toward enhancing nuclear capabilities of the country. We are talking



here about Iran's right to possess and develop nuclear technology as asserted by the ex-chief nuclear negotiator and current parliamentary speaker, Ali Larijani, who is not on good terms with President Ahmadinejad and is why he was removed from his post as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator.

President Carter's national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, described the US attitude toward Iran as silly and disturbed; that it pushes Iran outside the negotiation process which in itself constitutes a loss. Brzezinski regards the Western demand that Iran stop uranium enrichment as a precondition for dialogue as being neither understandable nor justified.

Conclusion

In light of these challenges and the diverse criteria upon which the Western stance is based, the solution to the Iranian nuclear problem requires that Western countries understand the true motive behind Iran's determination to enhance its nuclear capabilities - a serious and justified concern about the imbalance of power in the region.

Iranians have real concerns about this issue and it is not likely that Iran will relinquish its nuclear ambitions while Israel continues to develop its nuclear capability. The consensus among Iranian elites of all parties and currents rests on the possession of a nuclear deterrent as a "safety valve" for the Islamic Republic



which would discourage both the United States and Israel in their plans to overthrow the current Iranian regime as with Iraq and Afghanistan.

The US threat to target Iran after the events of 11-September, followed by the occupation of Iraq and the presence of 150 thousand US soldiers along the Iranian borders with Iraq, has been crucial in Iran's determination to possess a nuclear deterrent. And since Western suggestions do not take these matters into account, negotiations will lead the parties involved nowhere fast and will only lead immature Western politics toward aggravating the crisis further, which may have negative repercussions on World Peace in general and the stability of the region in particular.

Translated from Arabic by Monjia Abdallah Abidi

