

Aug 3, 2015

The Iran Deal: AIPAC Does Not Speak for Israel

In the last weeks, AIPAC launched a large campaign to dissuade Congress from supporting the recent P5+1 deal with Iran. As a “pro-Israel” lobby, AIPAC is campaigning under the false pretense of promoting Israeli interests. In fact, many Israeli security experts, past and present members of the diplomatic core, political leaders and public figures in Israel (including both supporters and critics of the deal) oppose Netanyahu’s intervention in this domestic U.S. debate. The attempts to influence Congress will harm Israel’s long-term interests if they fail and jeopardize its security should they succeed.

If Netanyahu’s campaign with AIPAC fails, Israel will yet again have meddled in American politics to no avail, aggravating an already strained relationship with the White House and making Israel a partisan issue in Washington.

If the campaign succeeds and a Congress majority overcomes a presidential veto, the consequences will be even worse:

- Iran will emerge as the clear winner, having held up its end of the deal while the U.S. backed out. Iran will be able to develop nuclear capabilities with broader international legitimacy.
- The sanctions regime will collapse, allowing Iran to continue financing terrorism. Israel will not be in a position to push for new sanctions, as it will be seen as having undermined the only successful world effort to neutralize Iran’s nuclear ambitions.
- Israel will have tampered with not only US but also global interests. Five other world powers were involved in the negotiations, with their interests on the line. This image of harm to world interests by maneuvering in U.S. politics will be detrimental to Israeli diplomatic relations.
- Under Netanyahu, Israel has become a partisan issue in American politics. His mishandling of U.S. domestic politics and confrontational approach to the international consensus on a variety of issues has eroded a large part of Israel’s support base. Working against Obama within the U.S. will harm Israel’s relations with its strategic allies even more.

AIPAC's campaign does not represent Israel and does not serve its diplomatic and security interests, just Netanyahu's political interests.

Select quotes by Israeli leaders against Netanyahu's intervention in US politics:

1. [Efraim Halevy](#) (former Head of Mossad): "Prime Minister Netanyahu is trying to assemble the necessary majority in Congress against the agreement. President Obama has already announced that he will veto such a decision, which would spell the collapse of the agreement and erasure of all the concessions Iran has made. Without an agreement, Iran will be free to act as it wishes, whereas the sanctions regime against it will crumble in any case, since many countries around the world will hurry to Tehran to sign profitable contracts. In such a case, the US will lose its influence over what is due to take place in the 18 months remaining until the end of Obama's term, its leadership will be emasculated and humiliated, whereas Israel will remain only with the independent military option. This is what British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond meant when he said that Netanyahu did not want any agreement with Iran, regardless of its content."

July 20, 2015

2. [Yitzhak Ben-Israel](#) (former general, Chair of the [Israeli Space Agency](#) and the National Council for Research and Development): "The agreement is not bad at all. It is even good for Israel."

July 15, 2015

3. [Ami Ayalon](#) (former Head of the Israel Security Agency or Shin Bet): "Finally, said [Ayalon], the prime minister should stop 'compounding his errors' by continuing to fight with the White House instead of mending fences. 'We need to see the agreement as a done deal,' he said, and stop trying to mobilize Congress against the president. 'First of all,' he said, 'the United States isn't the only party to the agreement. With all due respect to Congress, the Russians, Chinese and Europeans made a deal with the president of the United States. If there's a real chance that 13 or 14 Democrats oppose the agreement, then the United States won't be party to the agreement and the result will

be a truly chaotic situation.' For one thing, he said, 'I don't think the Russians will decide to maintain the sanctions because the United States Congress doesn't like the agreement. So what will happen is that Iran will escape sanctions, inspections will deteriorate, nuclear work will go on and we will lose on every front.'"

July 16, 2015

4. [Amos Yadlin](#) (Director of the Institute for National Security Studies): "Despite the severity with which it views the agreement, Israel must refrain from intervening in the American political system."

July 20, 2015

5. [Yuval Diskin](#) (former Head of the Israel Security Agency or Shin Bet): "After utterly failing to take any operative action against Iran's nuclear program, Netanyahu switched to confrontational diplomacy with the U.S. Administration. I am not against confrontation in certain situations, but when it comes to the U.S. we must act with great caution and take care not to jeopardize the strategic relations built up under former Prime Ministers Sharon and Olmert."

March 13, 2015

6. [Ehud Barak](#) (former Prime Minister and Chief of Staff): "I told my friends on the Cabinet that we must respect U.S. sovereignty. They have their own opinions, and we must listen to them. We must respect them. We must protect our sovereignty, while ensuring that we don't ruin our relationship with the President and with the American public. The relationship is still intact, although damaged. We must not interfere in U.S. politics!"

December 8, 2014

7. [Meir Dagan](#) (former Head of Mossad) on Netanyahu's previous U.S. visit: "The worst strategic damage to Israel on the Iranian issue was caused by the prime minister. His speech was not discussed with the professionals. Perhaps he discussed it with political

players. What will Netanyahu achieve on this visit? I fail to understand. What is he going for, applause? This visit is doomed to failure. An Israeli prime minister entering into a confrontation with the U.S. Administration has to consider the risks. The umbrella of veto that the U.S. is holding over us may vanish, and Israel will quickly find itself facing international sanctions. The risks of such a confrontation are unbearable.”

February 27, 2015

8. [Yitzhak Hertzog](#) (opposition leader and Chair of the Labor party): “The United States is our only true ally and I have no intention of interfering in its politics and telling Congress members how to vote.”

July 19, 2015

9. [Yair Lapid](#) (Chair of the Yesh Atid Party): “I have criticism of President Obama’s Middle East policy, but you have to know how to handle disagreement. It’s alright to disagree, you shouldn’t back down or flinch when it comes to Israel’s security needs, but you must not – absolutely not – get into a personal, unnecessary quarrel with him; you must not openly support his election rival, and you must not give a speech in Congress behind his back and without prior coordination, embarrassing him at home in collaboration with his political opponents.”

July 17, 2015

10. [Zehava Galon](#) (Chair of the Meretz Party): “The worst thing is what is happening now, the hysterical and harmful behavior of our government since the agreement, with the unnecessary quarrel with the White House, and the desperate attempts to partake in a coup against the President in Congress.”

July 22, 2015

11. [Ofer Shelah](#) (Chair of the Yesh Atid Parliamentary Group): “Netanyahu chose a strategy of confrontation with the U.S. Administration and rudely interfered with Wash-

ington politics. As a result, Israel was not represented at Lausanne or in Vienna and had no impact over the most critical junctures of the negotiations.”

July 14, 2015

12. [Shelly Yachimovich](#) (former Chair of the Labor party): “Going for Obama’s head, grossly intervening in U.S. politics, the overt, blatant affiliation with the Republicans, the speech in Congress orchestrated behind the White House’s back. All these were an abject failure... But the agreement is a done deal. No reasonable person truly believes that a two-third majority in Congress will mobilize to fight President Obama’s veto. So the calls to fight the Administration, the explicit campaign against the Administration, the public indictments of Obama, and the scenarios of an imminent apocalypse – while maybe cathartic, are nothing more than a sorry repetition of previous mistakes...”

July 16, 2015

13. [Omer Bar Lev](#) (MK, Zionist Camp and former commander of Special Forces unit): “Although it is highly unlikely that the Senate will not support the deal after Obama’s veto, let’s assume such a scenario. A U.S. decision not to accept the deal would only bind the U.S. In other words, the other five world powers, including the U.N and minus the U.S., would accept the deal and lift the sanctions. Iran would profit twice: the sanctions would be removed, yet it would not be bound by the deal (since the U.S. did not ratify it). Iran would quickly reach atomic bomb capacity. Israel’s loss would be triple – the sanctions would be lifted and Iran would get hundreds of billions of dollars, Iran would have an atomic bomb, and Israel-U.S. relations would be even worse.”

July 18, 2015

14. [Erel Margalit](#) (MK, Zionist Camp) on Netanyahu's U.S. visit: "The way that Netanyahu and his government have chosen to fight [the deal] could lead Israel into a dangerous security position by broadening the rift with the U.S. Administration. The prime minister is trying to mobilize Democrat and Republican senators to vote against the deal. Through his emissary, Ambassador Ron Dremer, he is, quite simply, grossly interfering in U.S. politics."

April 6, 2015

15. [Uzi Baram](#) (former Minister of the Interior, Labor Party): "The Iranian nuclear threat just became much less real."

July 24, 2015