

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
July 23, 2015



Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

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The next Middle East Notes will be available on September 3 after an August break. Periodic updates on Israel/Palestine will be available on the MOGC website.

Special alert: On July 20 the UN Security Council held a two-hour [Arria-formula meeting](#) entitled “Reflections one year later and charting a new course for Gaza.” Fr. Jack Sullivan, MM and MOGC staff member Anna Engelmann were in attendance. (You can see them in the center of the room, center of the photo.) This 2013 PDF, [The Gaza Strip: The humanitarian impact of the blockade](#), provides pertinent background information.



This issue of the Middle East Notes before the August break focuses on the background and implications of the Iran nuclear agreement, including analysis on the ascendancy of Iran towards leadership of the Muslim world; the effect of the agreement on Israel; opposition by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli lobby, and the U.S. Republican party; the choice of diplomacy rather than possible war; and other items of interest.

Commentary: After much dialogue and deliberation by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (U.S., Russia, China, UK, France) plus Germany with Iranian officials, an agreement was reached that Iran would not develop nuclear weapons. Opposition to the pact will continue over the coming weeks in Congress; however it does have its supporters. These include some U.S. business interests which want to share in future Iranian financial development; they recognize if the U.S. rejects this deal, it will be to the advantage of companies based in the EU and China. The church endorses the deal: Bishop Oscar Cantu, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' international justice and peace committee, [sent this letter](#) to every member of Congress, urging their support for the agreement. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has posted [this action alert and backgrounder on the topic](#).

- Marissa Newman in The Times of Israel reports on the UN Security Council's approval of the plan.
- Uri Avnery reflects in Gush Shalom: What if the whole nuclear agreement drama was only an exercise of deception? What if Netanyahu was duped to become unwittingly the main collaborator of Iranian ambitions to become the hegemon of the Muslim world?
- A Ha'aretz editorial supports the nuclear agreement; says Israel shouldn't give up the watchdog role, but it must give a fair chance to Iran and the world powers to inaugurate a new path.
- Chemi Shalev in Ha'aretz writes about lonely Israel, a done Iranian deal and Obama's earning his Nobel Prize. While many Israelis believe the Iranians have already taken Obama for a ride, the rest of the Western world will wait to see if Obama is as good as his word.
- Matthew Duss writes in the New Republic that the historic nuclear deal demonstrates an alternative vision of the use of U.S. power: Its security and the security of U.S. partners can be effectively advanced through multilateral diplomacy, and proves once again the importance of U.S. global leadership in addressing shared problems.
- Ilan Goldenberg and Elizabeth Rosenberg write in The Hill that the nuclear agreement creates an unprecedented opportunity to increase stability in the Middle East.
- Other articles of interest

Click on title to read article in its entirety.

1) UN Security Council unanimously approves Iran deal

Marissa Newman, The Times of Israel, July 20, 2015

The UN Security Council on Monday unanimously adopted a resolution endorsing the Iran nuclear deal and paving the way to lifting longstanding sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

The 15-0 approval of the Iran nuclear deal clears one of the largest hurdles for the landmark pact, which will now go before the U.S. Congress where it may face an uphill battle for confirmation. The UN vote came shortly after the European Union approved the nuclear deal, okaying the pact between the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany and Iran that lifts punishing economic sanctions on Tehran in exchange for temporary curbs on nuclear activity. Ambassadors from the so-called P5+1 touted the deal in a Security Council debate following the vote. ...

Ahead of the vote, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged Congress to keep U.S. sanctions on Iran in place. The UN Security Council vote is not “the end of the story,” Netanyahu said. “So long as U.S. Congress sanctions are in place, and noting that the U.S. economy is 40 times larger than Iran’s, Iran will need to make concessions.”

Netanyahu slammed the Security Council vote as “hypocrisy,” stressing that Tehran “systematically violates UN resolutions and calls for the destruction of Israel — a member of the UN.” ...

2) The Treaty

Ury Avnery, Gush Shalom, July 18, 2015

And what if the whole drama was only an exercise of deception? What if the wily Persians did not even dream of building an atomic bomb, but used the threat to further their real aims? What if Binyamin Netanyahu was duped to become unwittingly the main collaborator of Iranian ambitions? Sounds crazy? Not really. Let's have a look at the facts.

Iran is one of the oldest powers in the world, with thousands of years of political experience. Once they possessed an empire that spanned the civilized world, including our little country. Their reputation for clever trade practices is unequaled. They are much too clever to build a nuclear weapon. What for? It would devour huge amounts of money. They know that they would never be able to use it. Same as Israel, with its large stockpile.

Netanyahu's nightmare of an Iranian nuclear attack on Israel is just that – a nightmare (or daymare) of an ignorant dilettante. Israel is a nuclear power with a solid second-strike capability. As we see, the Iranian leaders are hard-boiled realists. Would they even dream of inviting an inevitable Israeli retaliation that would wipe from the face of the earth their three-millennia-old civilization? (If this capability is defective, Netanyahu should be charged and convicted for criminal negligence.) ...

3) Give the Iran nuclear agreement a chance

Ha'aretz editorial, July 14, 2015

The nuclear agreement signed Tuesday between Iran and the six world powers is an incredible diplomatic achievement and a historic milestone in the West's relations with Iran since that country's 1979 Islamic Revolution. For the first time since Ayatollah Khomeini seized power, there were direct negotiations between Iran and the United States. Those talks led to an agreement, which in addition to its technical clauses includes mutual recognition and equality among its signatories.

The enormous effort invested by Iran and the representatives of the world powers, particularly the United States, an understanding of the great opportunity, and the determination to finish the process and not give up produced a result that is liable to remove, at least temporarily, one of the greatest threats to the Middle East in general and to Israel in particular. ...

The talks with Iran seriously damaged the relations between Israel and its ally, the United States. The crude assault on U.S. President Barack Obama, who is accused of “selling out Israel,” can be chalked up by Iran as another achievement. Israel must now join the international community and share in its misgivings, but also share the hope the agreement represents. The countries that signed it also provide the safety net that can guarantee Israel’s safety and security.

4) [Ten comments on lonely Israel, a done Iranian deal and Obama's Nobel Prize](#)

Chemi Shalev, Ha'aretz, July 14, 2015

Will American business leaders allow European and Asian companies get a head start in exploiting a lucrative, sanction-free Iran?

1. Israel has rarely seemed lonelier in the international arena, or more despondent. Along with the GOP and some mealy-mouthed Gulf officials, it is the only country in the world so far to utterly reject the nuclear deal concluded in Vienna on Tuesday. ...
2. The nuclear agreement between the P5+1 countries is a done deal, even if it does turn out to be a “stunning historic mistake” as an ashen-faced Prime Minister Netanyahu said on Tuesday. Within the next two weeks, the accord will be given an international stamp of approval by the UN Security Council. There is nothing that Netanyahu or the Republican-led U.S. Congress can do to change that. ...
5. The Republicans, on the other hand, seem to be steadfastly and uniformly opposed to the deal: support for Netanyahu and vocal criticism of Obama are GOP gospel. The only hitherto silent force that might come into play to crack the solid wall of Republican hostility is big business and the oil industry, the titans of which are surely waking up to the possibility that Asian and European companies will be chomping at the bit to exploit the new business opportunities that would be created by the lifting of sanctions. ...
10. Skeptics will scoff now as they did then, but Obama supporters can justly claim that after six years he has finally vindicated the Nobel Peace Prize he received in 2009. At his acceptance speech, Obama pledged to work towards nuclear non-proliferation ...

5) [The Iran deal is a victory for Obama diplomacy over Bush warmongering](#)

Matthew Duss, The New Republic, July 14, 2015

... The idea that military force is decisive in a way that diplomacy is not remains a very attractive one, especially for politicians looking for cheap ways to appear tough. And to be fair, Obama has moved slowly on this, often frustratingly so. There are policy areas, particularly the use of drone warfare, where he has continued the commitment to the use of force. But Obama's Iran policy is one in which the president has followed through on that central promise of his candidacy, and with great results. In short, Obama's Iran policy is the anti-Iraq war.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq resulted in the deaths of more than 4,000 U.S. troops and more than 100,000 Iraqis, including many times that number seriously and permanently injured. It cost American taxpayers trillions of dollars. It empowered both Iran and Al Qaeda in the region, and led to the creation of the Islamic State. Its negative repercussions will bedevil the region, and U.S. policymakers, for decades to come. Conceived by the Bush administration as a demonstration of American military power, it succeeded only in demonstrating its limits.

In stark contrast, the historic nuclear deal announced Tuesday in Vienna between the U.S. and its P5+1 partners and Iran demonstrates an alternative vision of the use of American power. It shows that our security and the security of our partners can be effectively advanced through multilateral diplomacy, and proves once again the importance of U.S. global leadership in addressing shared problems. ...

6) A historic agreement

Ilan Goldenberg and Elizabeth Rosenberg, The Hill, July 14, 2015

The nuclear agreement reached in Vienna creates an unprecedented opportunity for the United States to deter Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and increase stability in the Middle East. It is also a far better option than the realistic alternatives. ...

During the Cold War, Republican and Democratic Presidents negotiated arms control agreements with the Soviet Union notwithstanding Soviet support for proxy wars that killed thousands of Americans. U.S. leaders and international partners negotiated these deals because preventing nuclear proliferation was an overriding priority.

Going forward the agreement faces two major risks. First, without sufficient bipartisan support long-term implementation will suffer and the deal may collapse. ...

In the end, a nuclear agreement is a net benefit to America's national security and far superior to the alternative. It also has the potential to dramatically and positively reshape the international landscape, but only if the United States pursues the right set of policies after a deal to consolidate gains and mitigate risks.

Goldenberg is the director of the Middle East Security Program at the Center for a New American Security where Rosenberg directs the Energy, Economics and Security Program.

Additional articles on Iran nuclear agreement

- [Press release: APN welcomes Iran nuclear agreement, urges Congress to support the deal, APN \(Americans for Peace Now\), July 14, 2015](#)
- [From bully pulpit, Obama names his foes: "Netanyahu and Republican leadership," Chemi Shalev, Ha'aretz, July 16, 2015](#)
- [The agreement of the brave, Orly Azoulay, Ynetnews Op-ed, July 15, 2015](#)
- [Obama: Iran deal is only alternative to more Mideast war, Matt Petalnick and Roberta Rampton, Reuters, July 15, 2015](#)
- [Why Bibi is personally responsible for Iran policy failure, Akiva Eldar, Al-monitor, July 14, 2015](#)
- [Why the Iran nuclear deal matters, Jacob Heilbrunn, The National Interest, July 14, 2015](#)

Other articles of interest:

[Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, July 10 2015, Hamas and ISIS: Friends or foes?](#)

[Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, July 17, 2015, As Palestinian Susiya awaits demolition, Israelis debate settlement expansion](#)

[Israel losing Democrats, “can’t claim bipartisan U.S. support,” top pollster warns, David Horovitz, The Times of Israel, July 5, 2015](#)

[The Israeli army proposes teeny steps to help Gaza’s imploding economy, Amira Hass, Ha’aretz, July 13, 2015](#)

[U.S. urges Israel: Don’t demolish West Bank village, Amira Hass, Ha’aretz, July 18, 2015](#)

[Israel ready for EU dialogue - but don't mention the settlements, Barak Ravid, Ha’aretz, July 13, 2015](#)

[Why Hillary Clinton is moving left on every issue except Israel, Peter Beinart, Ha’aretz, July 9, 2015](#)

[Will Pope Francis turn the Catholic Church into a movement for social justice?, Nitzan Horowitz, Ha’aretz, July 14, 2015](#)

[I am a Muslim and I am angry, Tariq Al Maeena, Gulf News, July 4, 2015](#)

[Will the UN Gaza report finally push Europe to confront Israel?, Amjad Iraqi, +972, July 16, 2015](#)

[Israel and Palestine need a joint truth commission, M. Cherif Bassiouni, Ha’aretz, July 14, 2015,](#)

Three UN documents on the two-state solution:

[Revitalizing Middle East Quartet, implementing Arab peace initiative, ensuring Security Council leadership key to two-state solution, Moscow meeting told, UN GA/PAL/1339, July 2, 2015](#)

[Amid tide of terrorism in region, two-state solution “only viable way forward,” Secretary-General tells United Nations meeting on Israeli-Palestinian peace, SG/SM/16902-GA/PAL/1338, July 1, 2015](#)

[Necessary conditions for successful political process examined at United Nations meeting on Israeli-Palestinian peace, GA/PAL/1337, July 1, 2015](#)