



After “The Iranian Agreement”

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Executive Summary

- * The much heralded “Agreement” with Iran is already proving to be a major milestone for the greater Middle East, albeit regarding issues that have nothing to do with the Iranian nuclear program.
- * Russia and China strive to consolidate long-term stability by embracing indigenous grassroots aspirations. Russia, China, Israel and Europe have common grand strategic interests in the greater Middle East transcending the friction wrought by localized and transient incidents, as well as instant-gratification political expediencies.
- * The US aims to prevent the emergence of the Common Eurasian Home as the substitute for the US-controlled Euro-Atlantic sphere. The US will rely on Iran as the regional hegemonic power that will empower Ikhwan-affiliated regimes in the Sunni Arab World. Obama will pay Tehran by neutralizing and emaciating Israel as a regional power - turning Israel into a Dhimmi state.
- * A most important part of Obama’s quest in the greater Middle East is the drive to empower radical Islam - the Ikhwan’s Sunni Islam and Iran’s Shiite Islam - as the revolutionary force that will inherit the region and ultimately Islamdom as well. For Obama, radical Islamism - Jihadism - is the revolutionary force that will soon spearhead the rise of the oppressed and the ensuing reversal and defeat of the West’s ongoing oppression of Islamdom and the rest of the developing world.

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Analysis

The much heralded "Agreement" with Iran is already proving to be a major milestone for the greater Middle East, albeit regarding issues that have nothing to do with the Iranian nuclear program. On 29 July, Rouhani stated that the agreement will help Iran become a key player in the world. "This agreement is not against any country and our cooperation and consultations to settle the regional problems, including fight against terrorism, humanitarian aids, and materialization of nations' demands can prove it," Rouhani said.

By avoiding any criticism of, or challenges to, the Iranian strategic programs - the international community effectively affirms Iran's posture as a de-facto regional nuclear power. The international commitment to defending Iran's "legitimate nuclear program" as stipulated in the agreement sends a clear signal that preserving the Iranian nuclear posture is in the interest of the international community. Meanwhile, the rapidly eroding sanctions pour cash into Iran and fuel Iran's rapid economic recovery - thus facilitating and expediting the dramatic strategic breakout of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Even though the Obama White House was the driving engine behind the agreement and the rehabilitation of Tehran - Russia and China are the real rising powers in the greater Middle East and thus the great powers to be most affected by the agreement.

Iran and Turkey are among the oldest and most persistent historic nemeses of Russia, and have had convoluted relations with China throughout history.

Russia has long dreaded the ascent of Jihadism of the kind espoused and sponsored by the Mullahs' Iran. However, Russia also needs a Shiite wedge separating between the radical Sunni cauldrons of Afghanistan-Pakistan and the Arab World. To reconcile between the two trends, Russia has long pushed Iran to adapt its core politics and adopt anew the Imperial Persian character. China is committed to the reliance on Persia (Iran) as the western pillar of the revived Silk Road - a core-policy issue for Xi's Beijing. Ultimately, however, both Russia and China are focusing first and foremost on the greater Central Asia as the crux of their Eurasian long-term partnership and grand strategies. There, both great powers look at the ascent of Shiite Iran in the context of containing the rapid spread of the Turkey-sponsored militant pan-Turkism. The activities of both Turkey and Iran in the greater Middle East are of secondary importance for both Moscow and Beijing.

Erdogan's Turkey is the major long-term threat to both Russia and China in lieu of the revival of assertive militant pan-Turkism. As a quintessential aspect of its neo-Ottoman identity and ascent, Turkey is actively sponsoring all Turkic irredentist causes - from the Balkans in the west to Central Asia and China's Xinjiang in the east, and from Russia's Crimean Tartars and the Islamists of the North Caucasus in the north to the Turkomen and Cherkess of Syria, Iraq and Jordan in the south. The Erdogan government's active support for secessionist insurrections has only increased recently in the context of the AKP-MHP juggling for power in the coalition negotiations. Russia must contain Turkey and the spread of pan-Turkism. The Kremlin is trying hard to restrain Ankara both by cajoling in the form of energy projects and by pressuring through military help to the traditional foes of Turkey in Armenia, Syria-Iraq, and Greece-Cyprus. To-date, the Kremlin has failed as Turkish sponsorship of militant and irredentist pan-Turkism keeps escalating and spreading.

The Forbidden City is also having second thoughts about the relations with Erdogan's Turkey. Back in 2010, during the visit to Ankara by then Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, the Erdogan government promised to "drop



official support for Uighur separatist groups" in return for massive economic and military assistance from China. Beijing also agreed to encourage Turkish investments in Xinjiang in order to help dampen Uighur nationalist sentiments, as well as permit the education of Uighur imams in Turkey. Since then, Chinese economic support has sustained the floundering Turkish economy and prevented its implosion. Both sides now realize that the Chinese help can't continue as is in lieu of Turkey's active and vocal help for Uighur secessionism. The innermost circle of confidants around Erdogan and Davutoglu are cognizant that Ankara's Uighur policy is likely to lead to the harming of relations with China but they are adamant on persevering with the support for all pan-Turkic causes. Rhetoric notwithstanding, Erdogan's official visit to Beijing in late July 2015 failed to make a dent in Ankara's priorities.

Erdogan's Ankara is emboldened by the US support for pan-Turkic secessionism throughout the Balkans, the North Caucasus and the greater Central Asia under the banner of human rights and self-determination. The policy of the Obama White House aims first and foremost to make life miserable for both Russia and China in their own backyards. Washington also capitalizes on this policy in order to cajole Ankara into not neglecting the Middle East.

In contrast, both Russia and China strive to consolidate long-term stability by embracing the indigenous grassroots aspirations to the extent possible practically. Both Moscow and Beijing advocate and sponsor pragmatic and attainable solutions in contrast with Washington's sponsorship of quests for maximalist hopes that only incite conflicts but are impossible to realize. Hence, the delicate balancing act pursued by both great powers wins them the support of most local powers even when they don't get everything they want or aspire for.

In the greater Middle East, Moscow focuses on long-term geo-strategic dynamics driven by indigenous grassroots undercurrents. There is a growing sense of urgency in Moscow because of the US-initiated and -led provocations and efforts to consolidate US/NATO military presence on Russia's borders. The just published official Naval Doctrine of the Russian Federation clearly states the Kremlin's position: "A defining factor in [Russia's] relations with NATO remains that for Russia the following is unacceptable: the alliance's plan to move its infrastructure to the borders of Russia and the attempts to give the alliance a global role."

Hence, the Russian vital interest is to consolidate stable friendly posture throughout the greater Middle East that will not serve as springboard for American encroachment. Moscow considers the sustenance and reinforcement of the Fertile Crescent of Minorities - from east to west: the Ahwazi Arabs, the Kurds, the Alawites, the Druze, the Maronites and the Jews - as the key to the long-term stability of the greater Middle East because these minorities have constituted the regional stabilizing buffer for more than a millennium and a half.

Historically, and up to the 1979 toppling of the Shah, Persia was also part of the alliance of minorities in view of both her imperial-cultural legacy and the Shiite identity as Islam's victimized minority. Presently, Islamic Iran is slowly returning to pursuing a regional role commensurate with the role of Persia and sustaining the minorities. However, Islamic Iran's strategic surge relies on a Shiite Crescent in which the Arab-Shiite HizbAllah is holding onto the shores of the Mediterranean rather than the other traditional minorities of the Levant (the Alawites, the Druze, the Maronites and the Jews). This is a major dispute between Tehran and Moscow. Russia insists on a viable strong Israel as an indispensable key to regional stability on top of Russia's genuine and constitutional commitment to the well-being of the millions of Israelis with roots in the former Soviet Union.



Meanwhile, Beijing focuses her strategic posture on geo-economic dynamics where novelties become as important as historic legacy. While the Chinese pursuit of the revived Silk Road in Central Asia is rooted in historic legacy, Beijing does not feel encumbered in the Middle East. Indeed, the Chinese first priority is improving their access to the hi-tech and other scientific-technological resources of Israel. The second priority is the expansion of the web of railroads derived from the Iron Silk Road to include railways from central Europe through the Levant to the Arabian Peninsula and, via Egypt, to Africa. The third priority is exploiting the Persian Gulf energy reserves to the extent possible in view of the growing long-term instability and violence.

Hence, Russia, China, Israel and Europe (that is gravitating to strategic-economic dependence on the Common Eurasian Home stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok and Shanghai) all have common grand strategic interests in the greater Middle East. The securing and sustaining of long-term geo-strategic and geo-economic stability and growth in the Levant are imperative to all of them. These are shared mega-trends of crucial significance that transcend the friction wrought by localized and transient incidents, as well as instant-gratification political expediencies.

In contrast, the primary interest of the Obama White House is to prevent the emergence of the Common Eurasian Home because it will substitute for the current predominance of the US-controlled Euro-Atlantic sphere. A cornerstone of the US policy in the last quarter of a century has been to forestall the development of a Common Eurasian Home by instigating proxy crises and almost-wars with Russia. Warmongering under the banner of NATO has been more expedient than attempting to convince Europe to abandon and reverse its gravitating eastward. Having failed in Ukraine (as part of the greater Black Sea Basin), and because of her inability to do anything similar in the more crucial greater Central Asia, Washington's next major attempt to take on the emergence of the Common Eurasian Home is in the greater Middle East. This is a logical choice given the growing importance of the region to Russia, China and Europe. The Obama White House's primary instrument in this endeavor is Islamic Iran leading a "moderate Jihad" to destabilize, and possibly even dominate, the greater Middle East. Subsequently, Islamic Iran, together with pan-Turkic Turkey, will also destabilize the greater Central Asia to the point of disrupting the east-west hand-shaking.

The plan of the Obama White House is to rely on Islamic Iran not only as the regional hegemonic power but also as the instrument for empowering Ikhwan-affiliated regimes in the Sunni Arab World. After all, using the Pasdaran's Quds Forces Tehran has already supported, sponsored and manipulated the HAMAS, Morsi's Egypt, the Syrian Ikhwan, Bashir's Sudan, and many other Islamist-Jihadist entities. Under the new plan of the Obama White House, Iran's Quds Forces will become the primary instrument for empowering Ikhwani and Jihadist forces (including al-Qaida-affiliated entities such as Jabhat al-Nusra and Palestinian Islamic Jihad) so that Tehran need not fear a Sunni backlash. The Iran-sponsored Sunni Jihadist forces will rise at the expense of the tribal-based traditional Arab forces such as Saudi Arabia and other monarchies, as well as Arab-nationalist forces such as Sisi's Egypt.

Tehran can only benefit from Washington's support and endorsement in the inevitable and escalating Sunni-Shiite fateful war already engulfing the entire greater Middle East. The rise of a coalition of Shiite Iran and Sunni Jihadist proxies will constitute a mortal blow to the region's minorities - the cornerstone of the Russian and Chinese strategic presence. Ankara is cognizant of the importance of crushing the minorities. Exploiting the rise of the domestic 'Islamic State' (run by al-Qaida's former chief in Turkey who challenges Erdogan's Islamic credentials), and the major dispute between the Islamic State and the AKP about the stature of the Ottoman Sultan versus the Arab Caliph (a profound theological dispute that does not affect the close opera-



tional cooperation between Turkish Intelligence and Baghdadi's forces) - Ankara declared war on both the IS and the Kurds in Syria. To-date, the vast majority of the Turkish air strikes were against Kurdish targets in Iraq in order to bring down the nascent Kurdish entity along the Turkish borders with both Iraq and Syria. Thus, Washington's acceptance of the imperative to destroy the minorities is reflected in the warm endorsement of the Turkish bombing of the Kurds.

The Obama White House is cognizant of the lure and importance of what Russia, China and Europe have to offer Iran. In order to cajole and win over Khamenei's Tehran, the Obama White House can provide one service that Russia and China cannot and will not - the neutralization and emaciation of Israel as a regional power. The elimination of Israel is a key strategic objective for Tehran. "The issue of Palestine and pursuing the strategy of destruction of Israel are the Muslim World's overriding priorities," noted the Pasdaran's strategy statement of early July 2015. Tehran does not consider the nuclear agreement as an impediment to this crux-policy. In late-July, Khamenei reiterated that "Israel's security will not be ensured whether there will be a nuclear agreement or not." Tehran knows that the US rhetoric about defending Israel is meaningless. When Kerry stated that the nuclear agreement "takes none of our options off the table," Tehran ridiculed the notion. "The table they are talking about has broken legs," Rouhani retorted. "Who could believe seeing a day in which those insisting on dismantling Iran's nuclear cycle surrender to Iranians' will to have the peaceful nuclear program."

Should the Obama White House succeed with their Israel policy, Iran will finally dominate the Levant and the eastern Mediterranean via the HizbAllah (which will also adversely affect the interests of Russia, China and Europe). Exploiting the Israeli self-devouring domestic power struggles emanating from the "peace process" with the Palestinians and Israel's apprehension of the strategic ascent of a nuclear Iran - the Obama White House has embarked on a concentrated effort to turn Israel into a Dhimmi state. The Israel of Obama's designs is incapable of defending itself and is incapable of protecting both the other minorities of the Levant and the conservative Arab monarchies from Iran's hegemony.

Rather than face the grim reality, Israel remains obsessed with preserving the special relations and close alliance with an Obama White House bent on all but destroying Israel. That a huge majority of the American populace strongly and whole-heartedly supports Israel has become meaningless in the policies of Obama's Washington. Both the American public and Congress are already overwhelmed with the domestic socio-economic calamities wrought by the Obama Administration to have the political power and capital to also wage a successful struggle on Israel's behalf. America and Americans are exhausted of world affairs. Hence, confused and frustrated politicians will opt to withdraw all together from the Middle East, platitudes concerning Israel notwithstanding, rather than confront the post-Obama explosive reality.

Hence, Israel will do well to remember Charles de Gaulle. For years, de Gaulle hailed Israel as "the ally and friend" of France. On the eve of the Six Day War, de Gaulle prophetically warned Jerusalem: "Don't make war. You will be considered the aggressor by the world and by me. You will cause the Soviet Union to penetrate more deeply into the Middle East, and Israel will suffer the consequences. You will create a Palestinian nationalism, and you will never get rid of it." He was clairvoyant regarding the long-term consequences of the war. What de Gaulle could not fathom was that the Arab World was hell bent on obliterating Israel and "throwing the Jews into the sea." Israel could not, and did not, take the risk of permitting the Arab World to give it a try. France immediately announced a total arms embargo on Israel. In late-November 1967, de Gaulle announced that France "freed itself ... from the very special and very close ties" with Israel. He added that



Jews were an "elite people, sure of themselves and domineering," who possessed "a burning ambition for conquest." Asked why the sudden hostility, de Gaulle exclaimed: "They didn't listen to me!" Jerusalem should internalize that Obama is far more touchy and vindictive than de Gaulle ever was.

Obama's own personal commitment to the empowerment of the Islamist trend, to the detriment of Israel, goes well beyond political expediency. As he articulated in his 1995 book *Dreams from My Father*, Obama is striving to establish at all cost the new post-Cold War world order. Obama is now determined to complete the undertaking before he leaves office in January 2017. This is his destiny and legacy encapsulated in one. The ultimate goal is the irreversible empowerment of the liberal leftist Gauche over both the ex-West and the developing world. The demise of the US-led West - that Obama considers the evil reincarnation of the powers of imperialism, colonialism and oppression of the developing world - must precede the Gauche's ascent. No less important is Obama's resolve to prevent traditional legacy forces in the developing world - such as tribes and ethnic groups - from filling in the vacuum created by the anti-West drive. Obama's relentless campaign to legalize same-sex marriage and rights in the developing world is also a major part of his drive to undermine the preeminence of conservative values and traditional social structures. In the developing world, Obama envisions the sustenance of fratricidal chaos and violence until the revolutionary Gauche is ready to seize and ascend to power.

A most important part of Obama's quest in the greater Middle East is the drive to empower radical Islam - the Ikhwan's Sunni Islam and Iran's Shiite Islam - as the revolutionary force that will inherit the region and ultimately Islamdom as well. For Obama, radical Islamism - Jihadism - is the revolutionary force that defeated the West European Crusaders - the forebearers of West European imperialism - and evicted them from Islamdom, and then surged and destroyed the (Eastern) Roman Empire - the symbol of Western military-civilizational supremacy and reigning over Islamdom. More recently, the Islamists defeated the Soviets in Afghanistan, leading to the historic collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as helped Obama to end the "wrong wars" in Iraq and Afghanistan and thus expedite his reversal of American unilateralism. Soon, Obama hopes, the rejuvenated spirit of revolutionary Islamism will once again spearhead the rise of the oppressed and the ensuing reversal and defeat of the West's ongoing oppression of Islamdom and the rest of the developing world.

Alas, not all of Obama's protégés are inclined to play the roles assigned to them in this great historic drama. Empowered and emboldened by the nuclear agreement and the US support - Iran is ready to strike out and rise not only as the region's unchallengeable hegemonic power, but also to avenge and right all the historic wrongs committed by Sunnis against the Shia since the dawn of history. Tehran's Quds Forces markedly escalate wars-by-proxy throughout the greater Middle East in preparation for the cataclysmic Sunni-Shiite war for the future of Islamdom that Tehran considers imminent. Should any power dare to challenge Iran's ascent, Tehran warned in late-July, Iran will rely on its strategy of "defensive deterrence" in order to deliver a "crushing and devastating" response to "any foreign threat."

Meanwhile, a recent doctrinal document of the Caliphate asserts that al-Baghdadi should be recognized as the sole ruler of all Muslims. Islamdom must face reality, the Caliphate advises. "Accept the fact that this Caliphate will survive and prosper until it takes over the entire world and beheads every last person that rebels against Allah," the document declares. "This is the bitter truth, swallow it." The Caliphate envisages a major confrontation with the US over the future of Islamdom with the greater Middle East being the first major front of Jihad. "Instead of wasting energy in a direct confrontation with the US, we should focus on an armed uprising in the Arab World for the establishment of the Caliphate." However, given the immense stakes involved, this con-



frontation is likely to escalate into a direct clash with the US-led West. "Even if the US tries to attack with all its allies, which undoubtedly it will, the Ummah will be united, resulting in the [End-of-Time] final battle." The ensuing apocalyptic fateful war, the Caliphate assets, will only expedite the triumph of Jihadist Islam over Obama's dreams for the region.

Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

About the Author of this Issue

Yossef Bodansky has been the Director of Research at the International Strategic Studies Association [ISSA], as well as a Senior Editor for the *Defense & Foreign Affairs* group of publications, since 1983. He was the Director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare at the U.S. House of Representatives between 1988 and 2004, and stayed on as a special adviser to Congress till January 2009. In the mid-1980s, he acted as a senior consultant for the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of State.

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Mr Bodansky is a Director at the Prague Society for International Cooperation, and serves on the Board of the Global Panel Foundation and several other institutions worldwide.



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