

Netanyahu, Obama, Iran and Palestine by Steve Jonas

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The sage Israeli commentator and activist Uri Avnery recently published an excellent analysis of the Israel/Iran situation on The Planetary Movement (1). Mr. Avnery presents the full list of strategic reasons why it is highly unlikely that Netanyahu will launch such an attack. It would result in: the immediate closing of the Strait of Hormuz and thus cut off the flow of about 40% of the world's oil; an immediate all-out Iranian missile assault on the Israeli cities with some missiles getting through and wreaking much destruction no matter how good the Israel/US "missile shield" is; unknown to most US citizens (including an unknown number of their political leaders, especially on the Right) anyway, Iran is very large country, "larger than Germany, France, Spain and Italy combined," Mr. Avnery tells us; it would be a long war, something on the scale of the Vietnam War. Further, very importantly (and the Israelis know this), given the very powerful Israeli nuclear force, what difference would it really make in world politics if Iran does get The Bomb (think India/Pakistan).

This is an excellent list, known to many of the Israeli and US political and military staffs and leaders who are dealing with the situation. Further, one could add to it, the cost of the inevitable massive civilian casualties, both to the people of Iran of course, but also to Israel, plus the further lowering of its already dismal reputation around the world and the inevitable further rise in international anti-Semitism. Of course, none of the elements of the list appears to be either known or understood by the Israeli Far FAR Right/AIPAC/GOP true political trumpeters of war in both the US and Israel, who really mean what they say, like for example in the U.S., Sens. Santorum and McCain: "bomb, bomb, bomb Iran."

However, there are political reasons why Netanyahu has no intention of attacking Iran. I think that for him they are the more important considerations for not doing so. Domestically, a recent poll showed that 60% of Israelis disapprove of any pre-emptive strike on Iran. Although he might not give a hoot about what would happen to oil prices from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, he does know what would happen to Israel as the result of a counter-attack from Iran using their conventional missile weapons. He also knows, counter to the Israeli published bravado on this one, that any attack in attempt to destroy Iran's "nuclear weapons" facilities, given the size of the country and the depth of the burial of Iran's nuclear facilities, whether for peaceful or military purposes, would be technically very difficult to carry out, with no guarantee of success. Of course there surely would be no "knock-out" of an Iranian nuclear weapons program if, as many intelligence analysts sources, including US ones, state, there is none (2).

Rather, it appears that Netanyahu's primary goal in trumpeting the "Iran/bomb-let's-bomb" option is to use it to try to secure a GOP victory in the US in November. Thus the painting of Obama as a wimp and blaggard (a scoundrel; an unprincipled, contemptible person; an untrustworthy person) on the matter, despite the fact that his position in reality varies little from the published Israeli one: "we [the U.S.] will not let Iran get the bomb" (whether they want it or not). Certainly, the AIPAC/GOP axis treats Obama that way. And why would Netanyahu want to do that, other than (apparently) really not liking Obama personally? Because his goals of aggression have nothing to do with Iran and everything to do with the Palestinians and the Occupied Territories, known to the Israeli Right, their US far right-wing/Orthodox settler base in them, and their US Right-wing Christian supporters. They all make policy based on Biblical text, which does, from several millennia ago, describe "The Land of Israel." What Netanyahu and his even-further-to-the-right allies really want to do is annex the West Bank and drive out the Palestinians. And then they would ethnically cleanse Israel of its Arab citizens at the same time. If Obama wins re-election, it is highly unlikely that any of this would be possible, and in one way or another Netanyahu would be forced into real negotiations. This is something he absolutely does not want to do (3). And so, the solution? Get a Republican government elected, by feeding strongly into the standard GOP myth that Obama (?Muslim, ?Kenyan, definitely "black" [even though he is half white]) is "weak." Iran would not be bombed anyway. Israel would certainly not have to negotiate with the Palestinians and might very well be allowed to proceed with its desired conquest, which certainly Israeli government officials have openly advocated (4).

