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# Debating the dubious Iran deal

Republican candidates should present plans to counter the coming nuclear proliferation

By John R. Bolton - - *Tuesday, August 4, 2015*

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With so many flaws, the Vienna agreement on Iran's nuclear-weapons program is generating considerable debate. But beyond the deal's many deficiencies, broader implications — almost entirely negative for the United States and its closest allies — are still not well understood.

Americans must consider these larger consequences, both during the ongoing congressional review and in the 2016 election campaign. President Obama's spokesmen have repeatedly declared the Iran accord to be his second term's signature achievement, comparable to Obamacare in the first term. They have a point: Neither the Iran deal nor Obamacare should survive a 2016 Republican presidential victory.

Consider just a few of the Vienna deal's long-term effects. Some could well materialize before the end of Mr. Obama's presidency, as states and terrorists try to take advantage of the White House's palpable weakness and inattention. All will persist for decades unless unambiguously reversed by a new president in 2017.

First, the negotiations themselves, clearly long headed in the wrong direction, have fueled an already-nascent nuclear-arms race in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia already had contingency plans to buy nuclear weapons directly from Pakistan, or perhaps even for constructive possession. Now, Riyadh has launched its own domestic nuclear programs, for "peaceful purposes," of course. Egypt, Turkey and Jordan have announced similar plans for indigenous nuclear programs and other regional states could follow.

Moreover, the nuclear proliferation implications extend well beyond the Middle East. Iran's victory in Vienna, which paves its way to nuclear weapons, is also evidence to all other would-be nuclear states. Mr. Obama's concessions to Tehran have effectively shredded the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, teaching the lesson that, with persistence and a thick skin, almost

any country can thwart international counter-proliferation efforts. Sadly, therefore, the odds are high that the number of nuclear weapons states will grow dramatically in the next decades.

Second, the Iran deal proves yet again that Mr. Obama gives little or no credence to Israel's security concerns, much like the administration's repeatedly failed efforts to force a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians that would endanger Israel's self-defense capabilities. White House rhetoric notwithstanding, Israel is on the verge of being cast adrift by its closest ally.

Secretary of State John Kerry, urging support for the Vienna agreement, recently warned that Israel would be even more isolated than at present if it continued its vocal opposition. This latest Kerry blast was a reprise of 2013, when he implicitly threatened Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for Israel's refusal to bend its knee sufficiently to the Palestinian Authority, "I mean, does Israel want a third Intifada?" he asked at the time.

The Obama administration's constant signaling that Israel is fair game is unmistakable to Israel's opponents. Such comments serve as far more than simple predictions of what might happen to Israel; they become causal factors in producing what will happen. Israel's enemies recognize that the White House already implicitly buys the argument that their reactions — increased terrorism, economic reprisals and efforts to delegitimize the state of Israel itself — are perfectly natural and defensible. With U.S. political cover for Israel publicly retracted in advance, the risks and costs of more muscular assaults are obviously considerably reduced.

Ironically, America's Arab friends now see us as increasingly unreliable, cutting and running from a complicated, dangerous region, and leaving them adrift. They have already begun to conclude they need other strong friends, and will not be troubled or hesitant if some of those new friends, such as Russia and China, have heretofore been seen as supporters of Iran. Duplicity, double-dealing and contradictory commitments are hardly novel arrangements in the Middle East, and will not take long to develop here. The unifying theme in what may otherwise seem superficially confusing is the palpable decline of both American influence, and international peace and security.

Third, beyond the Middle East, Washington's big-power adversaries and competitors, particularly Moscow and Beijing, have likely already drawn the conclusion that America is either unwilling or unable to play its accustomed role internationally.

Russia has already hived off part of Ukraine, and its troops are engaged in poorly concealed "rebel" military actions against the Ukraine government. The only question is where Vladimir Putin will cause trouble next. Many predict he will move against one of the Baltic republics (all three members of NATO) to see whether Mr. Obama's feckless response to military incursions into Ukraine will be duplicated when it comes to a NATO member. The auguries are not good.

And China, energetically pursuing its objective of making the South China Sea into a Chinese lake, perhaps will follow up with similar activity in the East China Sea or moves against Taiwan.

Congress and Republican presidential candidates should insist that these broader, potentially deadly implications of the Vienna deal be subjected to strict scrutiny and wide-ranging debate. These threats may not be written into the agreement, but they are nonetheless inherent in it.

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