

Isolated on Iran: Canada's Warmongering Alliance with Israel

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One again, the Harper government is out to lunch on an urgent global issue. While most of the world sighed with relief at news of the Iran-U.S. nuclear deal, John Baird, Canada's foreign minister, pouted and repeated belligerent talking points.

The deal announced over the weekend saw Iran agreeing to limit the extent of their enrichment of uranium and to allow more frequent inspections of their nuclear energy facilities. The agreement was announced after four days of talks in Geneva between representatives of Iran and the U.S., U.K., Russia, China, France, and Germany.

On Sunday (November 24), John Baird effectively condemned the deal. "Iran has not earned the right to have the benefit of the doubt," he said. And while other western countries promised relief of sanctions, Baird announced that Canada's sanctions on Iran would remain in "full force".

What explains the Harper government being out of step with the international community, and key NATO allies, on Iran? It's largely about Israel and Harper's alliance with the extremist government of Benjamin Netanyahu, who fumed that the agreement with Iran represents "an historic mistake" which makes "the world a much more dangerous place".

Baird's echoing of Netanyahu, as well as some of the most unreconstructed neo-conservative hawks in the U.S., should come as no surprise. This Conservative government has been consistent in its dangerous, warmongering rhetoric with respect to Iran.

Two years ago, for instance, I wrote about an interview in which Harper repeatedly told the CBC's Peter Mansbridge that Iran represented the "greatest threat to world peace". Harper, absurdly, even asserted that Iran "would have no hesitation about using nuclear weapons". As I [wrote at the time](#):

Harper is in effect claiming to know for a fact that the regime in Tehran is suicidal. Israel already has an arsenal of nuclear weapons—a fact everyone knows but which the government in Tel Aviv has never formally admitted. (Israel, unlike Iran, is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.) Any attack by Iran, let alone its use of hypothetical nuclear weapons, would result in its total obliteration. There is simply no evidence whatsoever to support Harper's claim...

John Baird's statements in response to this latest deal should be viewed in the same light. This government's policy on Iran is isolated, dangerous and evidence-free—unhinged from

reality. It makes more likely an eventual attack on Iran by Israel or the U.S., which in turns makes more likely a regional conflagration. As was the case earlier this year with Harper's support for an attack on Syria, the Conservatives are on the side of war-making, not peacemaking.

All that said, these latest negotiations need to be put in a wider context. The whole campaign against Iran's development of nuclear energy is aimed at weakening the country, which has become a greater regional power after the disastrous U.S. war on Iraq, and at maintaining Israel's monopoly on nuclear weapons in the Middle East. The farce of it all is that the whole discussion of Iran carries on without anyone mentioning the elephant in the room: Israel, the belligerent rogue state, and its arsenal of nukes.

None of this has anything whatsoever to do with human rights. The sanctions imposed by the West on Iran have nothing to do with the legitimate struggle within Iran against the regime and its depredations.

The sanctions are aggression, pure and simple. Not to mention hypocrisy. While the Harper government will continue to punish the people of Iran with "full force" sanctions, they do not hesitate to trade with and arm petro-dictatorships throughout the Gulf region. (Saudi Arabia, after the U.S., is the number one recipient of Canadian weapons sales. Canadian-made armoured vehicles helped the Saudi regime crush Bahrain's democratic movement in 2011, for example.)

So while it's necessary to call bullshit on Baird's hawkish reaction to this Iran deal, it's also relatively easy. Opposition to the Conservatives' warmongering needs to be comprehensive, and include criticism of their arming of brutal regimes throughout the region and of militarism in general.

Consider where John Baird was this weekend. Canada's foreign minister was playing host to friends like U.S. Senator John McCain at the annual [Halifax International Security Forum](#)—a summit of warmakers and the arms industry.

Baird and Harper make the world a more dangerous place.

On Iran, they are isolated in their hawkish belligerence even amongst NATO countries. It's scandalous and embarrassing, and one more reminder that we need to throw Harper and his Conservative party out of power once and for all.

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