

The Babylonian Captivity of Washington: Israel Can Start a War and the US Can do Nothing to Stop It

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The most troubling prerogative of modern government is the ability of the sovereign or head of state to go to war.

War means death, debt, and, if the decision is a bad one, the very end of civil society and the prevailing political order. Because war is potentially so terrible, a number of nations have curtailed the ability of the executive authority to make such a decision without first satisfying conditions imposed through constitutional and other political restraints. It is perhaps ironic that the world's oldest republic, the United States, has ignored its own constitution to grant to the president the authority to enter into armed conflict through the simple expedient of not actually declaring war. America has been de facto at war continuously since 2001 and the recent National Defense Authorization Act has codified an unending conflict in which the whole world is a battlefield and everyone in it is a potential enemy combatant subject to no constitutional or legal protection.

Many critics of the perennially lopsided relationship that the United States enjoys with Israel have noted a disturbing shift in the relationship during the first three years of the Obama Administration. To be sure, Obama appears to genuinely dislike Israel's arrogant Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a sentiment that is fully reciprocated. But Obama is bound hand and foot into an engagement with Israel in which he lacks leverage over what might or might not take place. Even George W. Bush was able to say no to Israel when it was mooted that Tel Aviv might attack Iran, but Obama has painted himself into a corner where the United States has little influence over what might occur. Whether the Obama reticence is due to the control exercised by his Chicago billionaire patrons, the Crown and Pritzker families, both of which are strong supporters of the Middle East status quo, or whether it is just a more generalized fear about what might happen in the upcoming national elections, the result has been paralysis in Washington. Recent war games conducted by the Pentagon have confirmed that a new conflict with Iran started by Israel would quickly draw the United States in and would become regional in nature. The war would not produce a good result for anyone involved and would be particularly bad for the United States, which would again slide into deep recession as energy prices soar.

So Israel can start a war and the United States can do nothing to stop it and will become a major victim of whatever plays out. If that is true, why is the mainstream media ignoring the story? The account of the disturbing Pentagon war games did indeed [appear](#) in the New York Times and was picked up in a number of other places, but it quickly died out, as always happens with stories that are critical of Israel and its policies. Supporters of Israel might also be quick to note that the hue and cry against another war is largely coming from the usual suspects who are philosophically opposed to interventionism, including supporters of

Ron Paul and a number of contributors to this website. But given their underlying pretense that the US is supporting Israel due to its own national interests, perhaps they should take another look at a document that recently surfaced on WikiLeaks. The document enables one to better understand that where Israel leads in foreign and security policy the United States will inevitably follow.

The summary of the Secret [message](#), which I reproduce in full, is:

“SECRET cable from U.S. Embassy, Tel Aviv, dated 12 December 2009.

“1. (S) Summary: Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Ellen Tauscher visited Israel December 1-2. U/S Tauscher focused her visit on setting the stage for a successful Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference (RevCon) in May 2010. She consulted with GOI interlocutors on potential strategy in addressing Egyptian insistence on pushing for the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East, as a way to divert attention from Iran to Israel. U/S Tauscher reiterated that the United States will not take any action to compromise Israel’s security and would consult closely with Israel — which GOI officials greatly appreciated. Nevertheless, U/S Tauscher said the United States is interested in exploring possible small steps involving Israel to address some of Egypt’s NWFZ concerns regarding the lack of implementation of the 1995 resolution. GOI officials for the most part were critical of these tactics, questioning why Israel should be portrayed as part of the problem. They recommended a more direct approach to President Mubarak – thereby circumventing the Egyptian MFA — in which Egypt is reminded that Iran is the regional nuclear threat. Other topics discussed include President Obama’s arms control and nonproliferation agenda, the P5 1 process and Iran’s nuclear program, the FMCT and CTBT, Jordan’s plans for a nuclear reactor, and Israel’s qualitative military edge (QME).”

Washington is sacrificing a vital interest, control of nuclear proliferation through the establishment of a nuclear free zone, to protect Israel’s ability to remain a secret nuclear power and dominate its neighbors. Read the message any way one wishes, but it would seem clear that Washington is colluding with Israel to shield the latter’s nuclear program from any scrutiny, a successful Non-Proliferation conference being one in which Israel is not discussed at all. If the US is seriously interested in limiting the spread of nuclear weapons one would think that Israel’s program is part of the problem, but Israel is making clear that any such suggestion is unacceptable and the Obama Administration agrees without pushing any alternative policy. Tauscher even goes one step further, pledging Washington to never act in any way that would “compromise Israel’s security” (as defined by Israel itself).

Tauscher and her Israeli interlocutors prefer to shift the narrative to Iran and do it through the back door by ignoring the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and explaining things to President Hosni Mubarak, who is presumed to be sympathetic. Iran, or course, did not then and does not now have any nuclear weapons and no nuclear program while Israel has hundreds of nukes and both missiles and submarines to deliver them with, but facts shouldn’t intrude into a friendly discussion between friends. It is also interesting to note how Israel’s “qualitative military edge” is so much a part of US security doctrine that it has its own acronym – QME.

The Babylonian Captivity is a biblical reference to the conquest of the ancient Israelites by the Babylonians, after which the people of Israel were allegedly removed from their homes and physically transferred to Babylon. A later so-called Babylonian Captivity refers to the abduction of the Medieval papacy, which occurred in 1309 when the French King Philip IV moved the pope and most of his cardinals lock stock and barrel to the delightful city of Avignon, where they remained for 68 years before the Holy See was restored to Rome. The French sought to use the powerful papacy with its vast bureaucracy to support their own foreign policy ambitions. It is perhaps not an inappropriate metaphor for what has occurred between Washington and Tel Aviv, with key decision making for the United States now being transferred to Israel. The State Department message clearly reveals that when it comes to foreign policy the American people are no longer masters of their own destiny and at best can only negotiate issues with the Israelis while at the same time issuing a carte blanche in support of anything Tel Aviv chooses to do.

If the Republicans gain the White House in November things will only get worse, as Mitt Romney has [explicitly stated](#) that he would defer to Israel on all Middle Eastern security issues. Perhaps it is time for a wake-up call in the United States. Instead of presidential wannabes declaring their subservience to Tel Aviv, they should perhaps begin emphasizing that they will only act in the future in the interests of the American people. To do so would exclude an unnecessary war against Iran, which would be both a shameful action and also the next major step in bringing our country to its knees. Most Americans choose to think that foreign policy does not really impact on their daily lives, but they are wrong to believe so. War in the Middle East and Asia have destroyed the US economy and moved America closer to a police state. Telling Israel clearly and emphatically that it is on its own if it wishes to dominate its neighbors and go to war would restore much need perspective and would do much to right the ship of state back here in the US.

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