

The Iran Deal: What You Need to Know and Aren't Being Told

by Joseph S. Spoerl (August 2015)

Iran and the negotiations surrounding its nuclear program are in the news a lot lately, but much of the reporting remains quite superficial, missing several important aspects of this issue. Two matters especially receive little or no attention, even from the most respected American news outlets. These are the role of Germany and the role of ideology. Both, it turns out, are crucial for assessing the wisdom of the Obama administration's Iran policy.

The Role of Germany

A little-known fact is that Germany has a very close diplomatic and commercial relationship with Iran dating back to the time of Kaiser Wilhelm. The German political scientist Matthias Küntzel documents this relationship in his book [Germany and Iran: From the Aryan Axis to the Nuclear Threshold](#).^[1] (A briefer statement of this book's argument can be found in a [recent article](#) by Kuntzel.^[2]) Before and during World War I, Germany cultivated close relations with Iran to counter the influence of Russia and Britain, the dominant powers to Iran's north and south; suspicious of the Russians and British, Iran eagerly embraced German friendship. German-Iranian relations endured after the war; indeed, "In the mid-1920s, Germany was the founder of the nascent Persian industry, providing it with the backbone of its industrial infrastructure and its trained personnel."^[3] The rise to power of the Nazis led to even closer relations. "The coming to power of Adolph Hitler," Küntzel writes, "in no way hindered these expanding ties. On the contrary, not only was the Shah delighted, but a large section of the Iranian intelligentsia and business community also sympathized with National Socialism."^[4] In late 1934, at the urging of the Iranian ambassador to Berlin, the Shah banned the name "Persia" and insisted that the name "Iran" or "land of the Aryans" be used exclusively. Hitler reciprocated by exempting the "Aryan" Iranians from the Nuremberg racial laws. To this day, German visitors to Iran are reminded enthusiastically by Iranians that Germany and Iran share "a common Aryan heritage."^[5] German-Iranian trade revived after World War II and Germany once again became Iran's largest trading partner. The Khomeini revolution in 1979 has not deterred Germans from trading with Iran: "According to the German-Iranian Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Tehran, two-thirds of Iranian industrial enterprises and three-quarters of its small and medium-sized firms use machines and systems of German origin"

and “Germany remains Iran’s most important and most trusted partner in the field of high-tech.”[\[6\]](#)

Germany has been one of Iran’s most helpful allies in the field of diplomacy as well, aggressively acting to thwart American sanctions and shield Iran’s right to enrich uranium. Germany is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty but it does not possess nuclear weapons. (Küntzel, it bears noting, is an expert on the Non-Proliferation Treaty.) As Küntzel points out, “Both Germany and Iran share an interest in interpreting the Non-Proliferation Treaty in a way that enables the nuclear option. Therefore, Germany has always been in favor of granting Iran the right to enrich uranium. The latter marks a major difference between Germany and the Western powers in the P5+1.”[\[7\]](#) Küntzel reports that “nearly every influential foreign policy advisor in Germany has recommended acceptance of the Iranian bomb...”[\[8\]](#) and he documents in careful detail the long history of German government efforts, dating back decades, to thwart U.S. attempts to impose sanctions on Iran.[\[9\]](#) By 2007 at the latest, it was clear that Germany was firmly aligned with China and Russia and against the U.S., France, and Britain on the issue of sanctioning Iran for its nuclear program.[\[10\]](#) Küntzel ruefully notes: “In response to an anti-Semitic regime, Berlin had lined up against the Western powers.”[\[11\]](#)

After reading Küntzel’s scholarship, Americans will be left musing, “With friends like Germany, who needs enemies?” The diplomatic history that he unearths also gives rise to questions about the diplomacy of Barack Obama. It is clear now that the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#), as the Iranian nuclear deal is called, is not intended to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear-threshold state, but instead manages and perhaps delays a bit Iran’s achievement of this status.[\[12\]](#) This, of course, is entirely congruent with Germany’s foreign policy, as it turns out. But why should we be surprised by this? The very framework that the Obama administration established to address the Iranian nuclear program guaranteed such an outcome. The “P5+1” format meant that seven countries would sit down at the negotiating table, and four of those countries – Iran, Russia, China, and Germany – were, quite predictably, on the same side. Britain, France, and the U.S.A. were destined to be outvoted if they really had tried to push for a tougher deal (which the U.S. under Obama probably never intended to do anyway). If the U.S. had insisted on negotiating one-on-one with Iran, while visibly building up its military in the Persian Gulf, a better deal might have been reached. Instead, Barack Obama’s multilateralism and aversion to military force dictated a framework that guaranteed the disastrous outcome that we now have: a virtual guarantee that Iran will have nuclear weapons in fifteen years (and sooner if it cheats, as it has repeatedly done in the past.[\[13\]](#))

Another problem with the P5+1 framework is that it ensures that Iran will be able to get away with cheating. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, Hillel Fradkin and Lewis Libby have

[pointed out](#) the enormous loopholes in the provisions that allegedly allow for inspections at “suspected” nuclear sites in Iran (as distinct from “declared” sites).[\[14\]](#) In the event of disagreement between Iran and the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) about “suspected” nuclear sites, the matter will be referred to a majority vote of the “Joint Commission,” four of whose eight members are Iran, Russia, China, and Germany: the very four countries that have tried their level best for decades to stymie all U.S. efforts to impose restrictions on Iran’s nuclear program. In short, the provisions designed to deter Iran from illicit nuclear activity are toothless – and the Iranians surely know it.

The Role of Ideology

The mainstream media in the United States rarely inform their audiences of the world-view that shapes and motivates the Iranian regime. Yet understanding that world-view is central to the question of whether Iran can be trusted with nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. In fact, the ideology of the Iranian regime bears all the traits that made Nazi Germany such a lethal threat to humanity: genocidal anti-Semitism, paranoid conspiracy thinking, imperialism, totalitarianism, and apocalypticism.

In his biography of the Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian journalist and scholar Amir Taheri writes: “The Ayatollah was...convinced that the central political theme of contemporary life was an elaborate and highly complex conspiracy by the Jews – ‘who controlled everything’ – to ‘emasculate Islam’ and dominate the world thanks to the natural wealth of the Muslim nations.”[\[15\]](#) Khomeini repeatedly accused the Jews, and Israel, of attempting to destroy the Islamic faith.[\[16\]](#) Khomeini taught his followers that the Jews “would never be satisfied with anything less than world domination.”[\[17\]](#) He was therefore committed to “the cause of physically destroying the Jewish state and forcing its inhabitants out of the Middle East....”[\[18\]](#) Khomeini also taught that “America, dominated by ‘evil Jews,’ is Islam’s arch-enemy...”[\[19\]](#) Thus, the chants of “death to Israel” and “death to America,” [still heard](#) routinely on Iranian streets and encouraged by top Iranian leaders,[\[20\]](#) are more than mere rhetoric. If the Jews control Israel and America and are plotting to destroy Islam, the most important thing on earth, then destroying Israel and America becomes a clear moral obligation of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Indeed, Khomeini’s anti-Semitic legacy is alive and well in Iran and has become a central component of the Iranian regime’s world-view. Anti-Semitic messages from senior officials and the major Iranian media “typically denounce Jews at large, attribute to them unique negative characteristics, and depict them as an eternal force for evil and the root of evil in the world since ancient times – perceptions which have their theological and psychological roots

in early Islamic traditions.”[\[21\]](#) Former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2010, for example, denied that Israeli Jews are even human, asserting that they “only appear to be human,” and anyway, since they are atheists, they “are not entitled to man’s minimal rights.”[\[22\]](#) The warrant for genocide could not be clearer. Ahmadinejad is joined in this Jew-hatred by so-called “moderates” such as former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who at the annual “Jerusalem Day” in 2007 explained to his audience that the Nazis’ “first objective was to free Europe of the evils of Zionism,” and this was entirely justified, because “the Zionists ... constituted a strong political party in Europe, causing much disorder there. Since the Zionists had a lot of property and controlled an empire of propaganda, they made the European governments helpless.”[\[23\]](#) Here we see retrospective justification of Nazi persecution of the Jews, the complete obliteration of any distinction between Judaism and Zionism, and the assumption of an all-powerful Jewish conspiracy.

The repeated threats of Iranian leaders to obliterate the state of Israel and its people must be understood as natural expressions and logical implications of the demonizing Jew-hatred that is an integral part of the regime’s world-view. For example, on December 31, 1999, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei stated before tens of thousands at a Jerusalem Day rally in Tehran, “There is only one solution to the Middle East Problem, namely the annihilation and destruction of the Zionist state.”[\[24\]](#) Another example is the statement by the so-called “moderate” Rafsanjani, who on December 14, 2001 said, “the use of an atomic bomb against Israel would destroy Israel, while [the same] against the Islamic world would only cause damage. Such a scenario is not inconceivable.”[\[25\]](#) Dozens more examples of explicit Iranian threats to destroy Israel can be found in this footnote.[\[26\]](#)

Holocaust denial is another important aspect of the anti-Semitism of the Iranian regime. Matthias Küntzel explains the significance of Holocaust denial:

To claim that ‘Auschwitz’ is a myth is to accuse ‘the Jews’ of deceiving humanity for the past 60 years in pursuit of filthy lucre. To talk of the ‘so-called Holocaust’ is to imply that over 90% of the world’s academic posts and media are controlled by ‘the Jews’ and are hermetically protected from the ‘real’ truth. Every denial of the Holocaust therefore implicitly contains within it the demand for its repetition.[\[27\]](#)

Like the Nazis, the Iranians are driven by an expansionist, imperialistic ideology. In 1980, the Ayatollah Khomeini announced, “We will export our revolution to the whole world because it is an Islamic revolution.... The struggle will continue until the calls ‘there is no god but God’ and ‘Muhammad is the messenger of God’ are heard all over the world.”[\[28\]](#) Some strains of Twelver Shiite theology hold that offensive war to spread Islamic rule is an exclusive right

of the infallible Twelfth Imam, who went into hiding in the 9th century and will emerge at the end of time, but the Ayatollah Khomeini did not subscribe to this position. Instead, he held that “the Shiite jurist has all the authorities of the Imam...” His successor, Ayatollah Khamenei, agrees, holding that “offensive jihad can be ordered by a qualified jurist...”[\[29\]](#) In fact, Mehdi Khalaji, a scholar of Shiite theology, writes that Khamenei holds that “waging war against infidels is completely legitimate.” (However, what we would call an offensive war by Muslims against infidels is to Ayatollah Khamenei really a defensive war “because by conquering non-Islamic territories, the ruler of the Islamic country defends the principle of God’s unity and Islam.”[\[30\]](#)) The current Supreme Leader of Iran is thus an unabashed defender of aggressive Islamic imperialism. In a typical expression of this imperialism, on February 26, 2015, Ayatollah Khamenei’s representative in the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, responsible for the IRGC’s foreign military and intelligence operations, [stated](#): “We will not rest until we have raised the banner of Islam over the White House.”[\[31\]](#)

The Shiite Islam of the Iranian regime also does not place any serious restrictions on the types of weapons that can be used in the waging of war, nor does it offer much protection to the lives of non-Muslim enemy civilians. Mehdi Khalaji points out: “It is very difficult to find a law in Islam that forbids Muslims from using any kind of weapon against the ‘enemies of God.’”[\[32\]](#) Moreover, “in Islamic jurisprudence, the distinction between civilians and combatants is very obscure when it comes to infidels.”[\[33\]](#) For example, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, head of the powerful Guardian Council and a close advisor to Supreme Leader Khamenei, said in 2005 that “human beings, apart from Muslims, are animals who roam the earth and engage in corruption.”[\[34\]](#) Ayatollah Khomeini taught that “The corrupt in every society should be liquidated ... The Qur’an teaches us to treat as brothers only those who are Muslims and believe in Allah. [It] teaches us to treat those who are not thus differently; teaches us to hit them, throw them in jail and kill them...”[\[35\]](#) (Yet perhaps even Muslim lives did not have great value in Khomeini’s eyes, for he taught that martyrdom is “preferable to this miserable life”[\[36\]](#) and he sacrificed over 100,000 children as young as 12 in minefield-clearing operations during the Iran-Iraq War from 1980 to 1988.[\[37\]](#))

Moreover, Khomeini often invoked the dictum that “the end justifies the means,” which, Amir Taheri points out, “in Shiite theology is more than a mere motto and can at times be taken as a principle of faith. Once convinced of the rightness of your objective, you are allowed to use practically any means, including murder, to obtain it.”[\[38\]](#) (In Sunni Islamic law also one finds the principle that “necessity excuses one from any rule whatever.”[\[39\]](#)) In the [most careful study](#) done to date of the status of enemy non-combatants in the Islamic law of war, the scholar of Islamic law and history Ella Landau Tasserón shows that classical Islamic law

gives only very weak and easily overridden protection to the lives of non-Muslim enemy civilians in wartime.[\[40\]](#)

For propaganda purposes, the Iranian leadership has publicly stated that Islamic law does not permit nuclear weapons, but Mehdi Khalaji is surely right to assert that “there is serious reason to doubt that claim.”[\[41\]](#) President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry, however, appear to have [been fooled](#) by this transparently insincere and discredited obfuscation.[\[42\]](#)

Finally, we must address the rationality or potential deterrability of a nuclear Iran. Would the threat of “mutual assured destruction” be enough to deter Iran from using nuclear weapons against Israel or the U.S., both of which could retaliate with nuclear weapons of their own? To answer this question, we must delve deeper into the world-view of the Iranian regime.

As mentioned earlier, the doctrine of Twelver Shiite Islam attributes great importance to the twelfth Imam, a descendant of Muhammad and the rightful leader of the Islamic community who was born in 868 AD and went into “occultation” or hiding, which will last until the end of time. The Twelfth Imam will return as the Mahdi or messiah amidst great bloodshed, which will claim two-thirds of the world’s population. The Mahdi will cleanse the earth of non-believers, killing anyone who does not believe in Islam. In particular, the Mahdi will kill all the Jews.[\[43\]](#) But the death and destruction will actually begin before the Imam’s return, because the Hidden Imam will come out of occultation “when death, destruction, greed, and injustice have all but engulfed the world.”[\[44\]](#)

Most Twelver Shiites do not believe that human beings can do anything to hasten the return of the Hidden Imam, beyond prayer and obedience.[\[45\]](#) However, the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) brought to public attention the existence of a new strain of apocalyptic thinking in Iran, and especially in powerful parts of the regime such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps. In his biography of Ahmadinejad, Kasra Naji writes that Ahmadinejad expects the imminent return of the Mahdi, and he even expected to hand over the reins of the Iranian government to the Mahdi before the end of his presidency. Ahmadinejad stated publicly, “Our revolution’s main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the Mahdi.”[\[46\]](#) Ahmadinejad chose many of his cabinet ministers based on their sharing this view of the Mahdi’s imminent return.[\[47\]](#) Ahmadinejad even accused Western governments of actively seeking out the Mahdi so they could assassinate him and prevent his return.[\[48\]](#) In a conversation at which the French Foreign Minister, Phillipe Douste-Blazy, was present, Ahmadinejad suddenly interrupted the discussion. “He asked those present ... whether they know why disorder and chaos are necessary in the world. He answered himself, adding: disorder, chaos, and injustice are the preconditions for the return of the hidden Twelfth Imam, the

Mahdi.”[\[49\]](#)

Some important theologians in Iran have come to link the killing of Jews to the preconditions needed for the return of the Mahdi. For example, Grand Ayatollah Nuri-e-Hamedani said in 2005 that “One should fight the Jews and vanquish them so that the conditions for the advent of the Hidden Imam are met.”[\[50\]](#) Reza Khalili, a former member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps who defected to the U.S., reports that in the IRGC there are many who share Ahmadinejad’s belief in the imminent return of the Mahdi.[\[51\]](#) Referring to the conditions that will portend the return of the Hidden Imam, Khalili states, “People like Ahmadinejad so completely believed that these conditions would hasten the return of the twelfth Imam that they were willing to foment universal war, chaos, and famine to bring it about.”[\[52\]](#) For people who think this way, the threat of nuclear retaliation will be less a deterrent than an inducement to launching a first strike.

Mehdi Khalaji, the expert in Shiite theology, draws a distinction between Ayatollah Khamenei and people like Mahmoud Ahmedinejad. Khamenei, he says, “is not an apocalypticist who believes that the Hidden Imam’s appearance is imminent. Instead, his views on the Shiite Messiah seem to follow the traditional view that no one can predict the exact time of his return and no one can hasten his reappearance by a particular action.”[\[53\]](#) In contrast, Ahmadinejad “believes that human action is necessary to prepare for the Hidden Imam’s return, if not to accelerate it.”[\[54\]](#) There is evidence that Khalaji may be wrong about Khamenei.[\[55\]](#) In any case, Khamenei is elderly and there is no telling what his successor will believe. Moreover, Ahmedinejad is a product of the Iranian system; he was president for eight years, and he apparently has many followers in Iran. There is no telling who may have access to nuclear weapons when Iran finally acquires them, as it surely will do. And even if Khamenei has different ideas about the return of the Hidden Imam, his worldview and that of his entire regime is disturbing enough anyway, especially when “moderates” like Rafsanjani justify the Nazis’ treatment of the Jews and call openly for the nuclear annihilation of Israel.

Conclusion

The Obama administration has adopted a “multilateral” foreign policy that essentially gives veto power over key decisions affecting U.S. national security to countries such as China, Russia, and Germany, who do not have our best interests at heart. It has also adopted an approach to diplomacy that completely separates it from any credible threat of military force. The result is the Iran nuclear agreement, which virtually guarantees that an openly genocidal regime that calls for the destruction of Israel and the U.S., and that may not be deterred by the threat of nuclear retaliation, will acquire nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic

missiles in fifteen years if not sooner.

[1] Matthias Küntzel, *Germany and Iran: From the Aryan Axis to the Nuclear Threshold*, trans. Colin Meade (Candor, NY: Telos Press Publishing, 2014). This book was published first in German as *Die Deutschen und der Iran: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer verhängnisvollen Freundschaft* (Berlin: WJS Verlag, 2009).

[2] Matthias Küntzel, "Germany and a Nuclear Iran," *Jewish Political Studies Review* Volume 26, Numbers 1 & 2 (Spring 2014), pp. 48-58, <http://jcpa.org/article/germany-and-a-nuclear-iran/>.

[3] Ibid., p. 50.

[4] Küntzel, *Germany and Iran*, p. 23.

[5] Ibid., p. 27.

[6] Küntzel, "Germany and a Nuclear Iran," pp. 50-1.

[7] Ibid., p. 49.

[8] Ibid., pp. 48-9 and Küntzel, *Germany and Iran*, pp. 222-4.

[9] Küntzel, "Germany and a Nuclear Iran," pp. 52-5; *Germany and Iran*, pp. 156-163, 200-221.

[10] Küntzel, *Germany and Iran*, p. 217.

[11] Ibid., p. 218.

[12] Robert Satloff, "What's wrong with the Iran nuclear deal," *New York Daily News*, July 14,

2015,

<http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/robert-satloff-wrong-iran-nuclear-deal-article-1.2292264>.

[13] On Iran's nuclear cheating, see Küntzel, *Germany and Iran*, p. 200.

[14] Hillel Fradkin and Lewis Libby, "Iran Inspections in 24 Days? Not Even Close," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 21, 2015,

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-inspections-in-24-days-not-even-close-1437521911>. See also

"The Iranian Inspections Mirage," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 23, 2015, p. A10,

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-iranian-inspections-mirage-1437607825>, and Michael R. Gordon,

"Some Experts Question Verification Process in Iran Accord," *The New York Times*, July 23, 2015, p. A11,

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/23/world/middleeast/provision-in-iran-accord-is-challenged-by-some-nuclear-experts.html?_r=0. In this article, Gordon writes, "The makeup of the committee

[i.e. the Joint Commission] makes it very likely that the United States could come up with four additional votes to form a majority supporting the demand for access." This statement could only be made by someone who is completely ignorant of the long history of German, Chinese, and Russian interference on behalf of the Iranian regime and against the U.S.

[15] Amir Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah: Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution* (Bethesda, MD: Adler and Adler, 1985), p. 159.

[16] Ibid., pp. 131-2, 139, 149, 152.

[17] Ibid., p. 167.

[18] Ibid., p. 297; cf. p. 270.

[19] Ibid., p. 299.

[20] "Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei Reaffirms 'Death to America' Slogan, Calls to Bring U.S. Leaders to Trial," Middle East Media Research Institute, Clip No. 5011, July 18, 2015, http://www.memri.org/clip_transcript/en/5011.htm.

[21] E. Zigron and A. Savyon, "The Image of the Jew In The Eyes of Iran's Islamic Regime – Part I: Theological Roots," Middle East Media Research Institute, Inquiry and Analysis Series Report No. 922, January 27, 2013, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/51/6956.htm>