

RESPONSES TO THE PRESIDENT'S ARGUMENTS FOR THE NUCLEAR DEAL

By Dennis Prager
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At American University last week, President Barack Obama gave a vigorous defense of the Iran nuclear agreement. In the belief that every student who was present — indeed, all Americans — should hear the other side, here are responses to claims the president made. (For the information of my readers, I made a Prager University video on the agreement released last week that has about five million views on YouTube and Facebook — found at www.prageruniversity.com. Americans obviously want clarity on this issue.)

—President Obama: "With all of the threats that we face today, it is hard to appreciate how much more dangerous the world was at that time (when John F. Kennedy gave his peace speech at American University during the Cold War)."

I lived through the Cold War and studied the Russian language and the communist world at the Russian Institute of Columbia University's School of International Affairs. I do not believe the world was "much more dangerous at that time."

First, in the 1960s, when JFK gave his speech, the Soviet Union was headed by people who valued their own lives and even those of their fellow countrymen incomparably more than the Islamic leaders of Iran do. They therefore had no interest in nuclear war, which is why the doctrine known as mutually assured destruction (MAD) worked. Regarding Iran's Islamist regime, however, MAD does not necessarily work. The Islamist fanatics who rule Iran might actually welcome a nuclear exchange with Israel. Iran has almost 10 times Israel's population and nearly eight times its landmass.

Second, the Soviet Union never seriously or repeatedly called for the extermination of another country, as the Islamic Republic of Iran does with regard to Israel. It is preposterous to compare Nikita Khrushchev's promise, "We will bury you," to the ayatollah's aim to "annihilate" Israel. It was simply a rhetorical flourish about communism's eventual triumph over democratic capitalism.

Third, almost no one in any communist country believed in communism. The biggest believers in communism tended to be Western intellectuals. And communists in the West weren't beheading people or plotting mass murder. On the other hand, at least a hundred million Muslims believe in imposing — by force, if necessary — sharia on other people. And while communists in Western European countries posed an electoral threat to democratic capitalism, more than a few Muslims in European countries pose life-and-death threats to Europeans.

—Obama: "In light of these mounting threats, a number of strategists here in the United States argued we had to take military action against the Soviets, to hasten what they saw as inevitable confrontation. But the young president offered a different vision."

If there really were "a number of strategists" who called for "military action" against the Soviet Union during Kennedy's presidency, that number was so tiny and so irrelevant that the president's statement is essentially a straw man.

—Obama: "After two years of negotiations, we have achieved a detailed arrangement that permanently prohibits Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

This might be the whopper of the speech. Only an academic audience could find this statement persuasive.

To begin with, Iran has been "permanently prohibited" from obtaining nuclear weapons since 1970, the year Iran signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. So this arms deal prohibits nothing that wasn't already prohibited more than 45 years ago.

Even more important, the statement is utterly meaningless. It is like saying, "The United States has permanently prohibited murder." It's true, but so what? Iran's behavior clearly indicates that it wants to develop nuclear weapons, and being "prohibited" from doing so did not and will not stop it. Again, it would be like saying, "Nazi Germany was prohibited from attacking Poland."

—Obama: *"It cuts off all of Iran's pathways to a bomb."*

The only question is whether Obama believes this.

There are two types of lies: those one knows to be falsehoods and those the person believes. The former is more immoral. The latter, though not literally a lie, is more dangerous.

Even if one believes the agreement to be effective, it does little or nothing to prevent Iran from making nuclear weapons in 10 years.

Furthermore, the agreement enables Iran to cheat the whole time. There is no inspection "anytime, anywhere" — which is the only type of inspection that matters.

a) If the IAEA suspects cheating, it gives Iran up to a 24-day notice. If Iran objects, the issue goes before the P5+1 nations, which, of course, include Russia and China. Charles Krauthammer quoted comedian Jackie Mason as observing that New York City restaurants get more intrusive inspections than the Iranian nuclear program.

b) The United States is prohibited from ever sending in its own inspectors.

c) No military sites can ever be inspected. Iran can therefore establish or move nuclear facilities to whatever area it wishes and label those areas "military."

d) How are Congress and the American people supposed to trust the president's claim given the existence of two secret appendices to the agreement?

—Obama: *"It contains the most comprehensive inspection and verification regime ever negotiated to monitor a nuclear program."*

In light of all of the agreement's fatal weaknesses in preventing Iran from cheating, "most comprehensive ever negotiated" means nothing.

—Obama: *"Congress decides whether to support this historic diplomatic breakthrough, or instead blocks it over the objection of the vast majority of the world."*

Since when does "vast majority of the world" matter to making America — and, for that matter, the world — secure? President Ronald Reagan put Pershing missiles in Europe "over the objection of the vast majority of the world." Good thing Reagan did. Israel knocked out Saddam Hussein's Iraqi nuclear reactor "over the objection of the vast majority of the world." Good thing Israel did.

—Obama: *"Between now and the congressional vote in September, you are going to hear a lot of arguments against this deal, backed by tens of millions of dollars in advertising."*

There can be only one reason the president mentioned "backed by tens of millions of dollars in advertising": to imply that there is something nefarious about such ads. The president and the rest of the American left are beside themselves over the fact that their views are not the only ones Americans get to hear. In Europe, this is not a problem for the left. There are essentially no paid ads for alternate political views, no talk radio, no Fox News, no Wall Street Journal Opinion Page (or at

least none with anywhere near the clout of the American edition), no huge non-left intellectual and activist presence on the Internet, etc.

The left has the presidency and dominates education from pre-K through post-grad as well as mainstream print and electronic news and entertainment media. But that's not enough. Paid ads that differ with the left must be delegitimized. Of course, there are also millions of dollars in advertising for the agreement — but somehow that's legitimate.

But there is an even more sinister aspect to the president's comment.

He doesn't say it outright, but the left does. Those "tens of millions of dollars" are assumed to be Jewish dollars. This is now a major theme on the left: that the "Jewish lobby" and its money are the primary reasons for the opposition to Obama's Iran agreement.

A good example is a piece published this past weekend in the Huffington Post by a left-wing Yale University professor of English, David Bromwich. He labels as "treason" an address given by the Israeli prime minister to the annual meeting of the Jewish Federations of North America on reasons to oppose the Iran nuclear agreement. That's the oldest of antisemitic libels: that Jews are disloyal to the countries in which they live.

And the title of Bromwich's article — "Netanyahu and His Marionettes" — exemplifies another age-old antisemitic libel: of Jews pulling the strings of the world's major nations.

The president's reference to "tens of millions of dollars" has only helped reinforce those libels.

—Obama: "Many of the same people who argued for the war in Iraq are now making the case against the Iran nuclear deal."

Many of the same people — such as John Kerry, Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden — who voted for the war in Iraq are now making the case for the Iran nuclear deal. So the point is just an ad hominem attack on the deal's critics.

Moreover, whatever one thinks of the war in Iraq, the reason the Islamic State has taken over large parts of Iraq is not the war in Iraq. It's that Obama, against the advice of his military advisers, removed all of America's troops from a pacified Iraq, creating the vacuum the Islamic State now fills.

—Obama: "There will be 24/7 monitoring of Iran's key nuclear facilities."

This is a sleight of hand. There is no 24/7 monitoring of anything Iran doesn't want monitored 24/7 and no monitoring at all of any facility Iran labels "military."

—Obama: "If Iran violates the agreement over the next decade, all of the sanctions can snap back into place."

"Can" is the operative word here — as in "a third-party candidate can be elected president." It theoretically can happen, but it won't. Does the president believe that Chinese and Russian sanctions will "snap back" if Iran cheats? If he does, he is frighteningly out of touch with reality. Nor

will European sanctions likely snap back. French and German companies are already negotiating deals with the Iranian regime.

—Obama: *"Unfortunately, we're living through a time in American politics where every foreign policy decision is viewed through a partisan prism... Before the ink was even dry on this deal, before Congress even read it, a majority of Republicans declared their virulent opposition."*

As usual with Obama, opposition to his policies is "partisan." But support for his policies is nonpartisan.

—Obama: *"The bottom line is, if Iran cheats, we can catch them, and we will."*

That is not the bottom line. The bottom line is that Iran will cheat, we won't always catch them, and the Obama administration will likely have little inclination to call Iran out on it. In fact, the Iranians are already cheating. As Bloomberg reported last week: "The U.S. intelligence community has informed Congress of evidence that Iran was sanitizing its suspected nuclear military site at Parchin, in broad daylight, days after agreeing to a nuclear deal with world powers."

There are so many loopholes that we will awaken one day to find out that Iran is testing nuclear weapons just as North Korea did after signing its nuclear agreement with the United States.

—Obama: *"Third, a number of critics say the deal isn't worth it, because Iran will get billions of dollars in sanctions relief. Now, let's be clear. The international sanctions were put in place precisely to get Iran to agree to constraints on its program. That's the point of sanctions. Any negotiated agreement with Iran would involve sanctions relief."*

If America had held firm for anytime/anywhere inspections, Iran either would have agreed to such inspections or, if not, sanctions might well have remained in place. Our European allies were on board. As recently as June, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius was warning that "a possible nuclear deal with Iran risks sparking a nuclear arms race in the Middle East unless the agreement grants international inspectors access to Iranian military sites and other secret facilities. ... The best agreement, if you cannot verify it, it's useless."

But America is led by a president who wanted any agreement, even a useless one.

—Obama: *"Our best analysts expect the bulk of this revenue to go into spending that improves the economy and benefits the lives of the Iranian people."*

Even if that is what happens, this money massively strengthens the Iranian regime. But everyone knows that much of the \$40 billion to \$140 billion to be released will go to Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen and other pro-Iranian terror groups.

—Obama: *"Contrary to the alarmists who claim Iran is on the brink of taking over the Middle East, or even the world, Iran will remain a regional power with its own set of challenges."*

Every country — whether free or a police state — has "its own set of challenges." That point is meaningless. But it is hardly "alarmist" to fear Iran seeking to dominate the Middle East and helping to prop up anti-American regimes around the world. It is already doing so in Latin America.

—Obama: *"We will continue to insist upon the release of Americans detained unjustly."*

Well, that's reassuring. If the U.S. president and secretary of state couldn't even get Iran to release four illegally imprisoned American citizens in exchange for the ending of sanctions and a porous nuclear agreement, how will he get them released now?

—Obama: *"Just because Iranian hardliners chant "death to America" does not mean that that's what all Iranians believe."*

This comment is noteworthy — for its foolishness. Of course not all Iranians believe in death to America. But the Iranians who don't believe in it are irrelevant in Iran, just as good Germans were irrelevant in Nazi Germany and good Russians were irrelevant in the Soviet Union. All that matters in a police state is what the regime believes.

—Obama: *"It's those hardliners chanting "death to America" who have been most opposed to the deal. They're making common cause with the Republican caucus."*

Likening Iranians who chant "death to America" to Republicans may be a new low in American presidential rhetoric.

And it's not just mean-spirited. It's factually wrong. If anyone is "making common cause" with the Iranian hardliners, it is Obama and his supporters. The hardliners in Iran want sanctions dropped and to be able to continue their pursuit of nuclear weapons. Now they can.

—Obama: *"As members of Congress reflect on their pending decision, I urge them to set aside political concerns."*

So do those of us who oppose the Iran nuclear agreement. But it's the Democrats who cannot set aside political concerns. Let's be real: If a Republican president had negotiated this deal, the vast majority of Democrats would oppose it — and so would the vast majority of Republicans.

—Obama: *"My fellow Americans, contact your representatives in Congress, remind them of who we are, remind them of what is best in us and what we stand for so that we can leave behind a world that is more secure and more peaceful for our children."*

On that, we agree.