

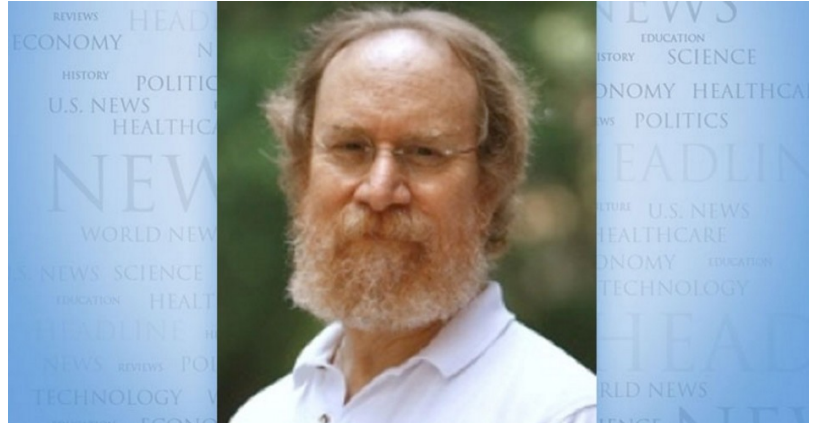


Written by [Sheldon Richman](#) on October 11, 2012

## The Glaring Contradiction in Anti-Iran Policy

President Barack Obama, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have at least one thing in common when it comes to Iran. All are guilty of flagrant self-contradiction.

Each says that a nuclear-armed Iran could not be effectively contained the way the U.S. government contained the nuclear-armed Soviet Union and Communist China. Yet each also says that Iran can be prevented from acquiring a nuclear capability or weapon if the United States and Israel draw a “red line” and threaten Iran militarily if it crosses the line.



Both assertions cannot be true.

In his speech before the United Nations, Netanyahu, holding a poster of a cartoon bomb, [said](#),

There are those who believe that a nuclear-armed Iran can be deterred like the Soviet Union. That’s a very dangerous assumption.... Militant Jihadists behave very differently from secular Marxists.... Deterrence worked with the Soviets, because every time the Soviets faced a choice between their ideology and their survival, they chose their survival. But deterrence may not work with the Iranians once they get nuclear weapons.

There’s a great scholar of the Middle East, Professor Bernard Lewis, who put it best. He said that for the Ayatollahs of Iran, mutually assured destruction is not a deterrent, it’s an inducement.

In Obama’s [UN speech](#), he said,

Make no mistake, a nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained.... And that’s why the United States will do what we must to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Romney has said similar things. In his speech in Jerusalem last August [he said](#) that Iran “gives us no reason to trust them with nuclear material” and that “preventing [their developing a nuclear capability] must be our highest national security priority.”

All three men portray the Iranian regime as consisting of suicidal fanatics who, once having acquired even one nuclear weapon, would use it against Israel. Obama, Romney, and Netanyahu seem to believe the Iranians would use the bomb regardless of Israel’s powerful military and its nuclear arsenal of at least 200 warheads, some of which are mounted on submarines, permitting a devastating second-strike



capability.

In other words, if the Iranian regime were to acquire a nuclear bomb (a very big “if”), there would be no reasoning with it. Threats of massive retaliation — the essence of containment and deterrence — would likely have no effect whatsoever.

But if that is true, why would Obama, Romney, and Netanyahu expect that setting red lines backed by military threats would have the desired effect of deterring Iran from developing a nuclear capability or a weapon itself? How can Obama and Romney hope that harsh sanctions will dissuade Iran’s “apocalyptic leaders” from developing a nuclear capability?

Why is deterrence expected to fail in one case but succeed in the other? The same allegedly suicidal fanatics would be making the decision.

I have yet to hear the mainstream media ask any of them these questions. Instead, the national “reporters” — stenographers, really — supinely pack Obama, Romney, and Netanyahu’s fallacious premises into softball questions designed simply to let these men enunciate their talking points. You’d never know from their “coverage” that top military and intelligence figures in the United States and Israel say that Iran’s leaders are “rational actors,” that is, open to reason and not suicidal. The mainstream media have shamefully ill-served the American public, whose interests would be gravely harmed by a war with Iran.

The media accept another of these men’s premises rather than putting it to the test. This is the assertion, as Netanyahu would have it, that Iran is racing toward acquisition of a nuclear weapon.

Both the Israeli and the U.S. intelligence communities say that Iran has not decided to acquire a weapon. Contrary to Netanyahu’s hysterical warnings of a pending existential threat (warnings that go back decades), Iran has been turning its enriched uranium into a form that, while suitable for producing medical isotopes, is unsuitable for making weapons. Twice America’s intelligence agencies have concluded that Iran scrapped its suspected nuclear program in 2003, after the U.S. military ousted Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. Moreover, Iran, unlike Israel, has signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is subject to inspections by permanently stationed International Atomic Energy Agency personnel.

The Iranian “threat” is another manufactured crisis.

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