

The World Rebukes Netanyahu

Exclusive: Led by President Obama, six world powers ignored Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's harangues against Iran and agreed to a plan for limiting not bombing Iran's nuclear program. But Netanyahu wields more sway with Congress and the mainstream media, which parrot his complaints, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In a rare rebuke to his bullying, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to stop the United States and five other world powers from reaching an agreement to constrain but not eliminate Iran's nuclear program. Yet, Netanyahu still is dominating how the U.S. public and congressional debate is being framed, with Iran accused of regional "aggression" in four countries.

On Tuesday, a recurring theme on U.S. news broadcasts, such as Andrea Mitchell's MSNBC program, was that any lifting of economic sanctions against Iran will give it more money to engage in trouble-making in the Middle East with references to four nations Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen a central theme in Netanyahu's speech on March 3 to a joint session of the U.S. Congress.

To repeated standing ovations from U.S. senators and congressmen, Netanyahu declared: "In the Middle East, Iran now dominates four Arab capitals, Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut and Sanaa. And if Iran's aggression is left unchecked, more will surely follow. So, at a time when many hope that Iran will join the community of nations, Iran is busy gobbling up the nations. We must all stand together to stop Iran's march of conquest, subjugation and terror."

Netanyahu's reference to "Iran's aggression," which is now becoming a conventional-wisdom talking point in Official Washington, was curious since Iran has not invaded another country for centuries. In 1980, Saddam Hussein's Iraq at the urging of Saudi Arabia invaded Iran. But Iran has not invaded any of the four countries that Netanyahu cited.

One of Netanyahu's citations of Arab cities supposedly conquered by Iran was particularly strange: Baghdad, which is the capital of Iraq where the U.S. military invaded in 2003 to overthrow Saddam Hussein and his Sunni-dominated government, on Netanyahu's recommendation. In other words, Iraq was conquered not by Iranian "aggression" but by U.S. aggression with the support of Israel.

After the Iraq invasion, President George W. Bush installed a Shiite-dominated government which then developed friendly ties to Iran's Shiite government. So, whatever influence Iran has in Baghdad is the result of a U.S. invasion that

Netanyahu personally encouraged.

More recently, Iran has helped the embattled Iraqi government in its struggle against the murderous Islamic State militants who seized large swaths of Iraqi territory last summer. Indeed, Iraqi officials have credited Iran with playing a crucial role in blunting the Islamic State, the terrorists whom President Barack Obama has identified as one of the top security threats facing the United States.

So, in the current Iraqi fight against the head-chopping Islamic State, Iran and the United States are on the same side. Yet, Netanyahu calls Iran's help "aggression" and American talking heads repeat that refrain.

Netanyahu also cited Damascus, where Iran has aided the Syrian government in its struggle against the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda's Nusra Front. That means that Iran is assisting the internationally recognized government of Syria hold off two major terrorist organizations. By contrast, Israel and Saudi Arabia have provided direct and indirect help at least to Nusra. [See Consortiumnews.com's ["Did Money Seal Israel-Saudi Alliance?"](#)]

The Israeli prime minister also mentioned Beirut, Lebanon, and Sanaa, Yemen, but those were rather bizarre references, too, since Lebanon is governed by a multi-ethnic arrangement that includes a number of religious and political factions. Hezbollah is one and it has close ties to Iran, but it is stretching the truth to say that Iran "dominates" Beirut or Lebanon.

Similarly, in Sanaa, the Houthis, a Shiite-related sect, have taken control of Yemen's capital and have reportedly received some help from Iran, but the Houthis deny those reports and are clearly far from under Iranian control. The Houthis also have vowed to work with the Americans to carry on the fight against Yemen's Al-Qaeda affiliate, which has benefitted from a brutal Saudi bombing campaign against Houthi targets, an act of real aggression that has killed hundreds of civilians and provoked a humanitarian crisis.

Indeed, Iran and these various Shiite-linked movements have been among the most effective in battling Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, while Israel's Saudi friends have been repeatedly linked to funding and supporting these Sunni terrorist organizations.

So, there is little truth and much exaggeration to Netanyahu's depiction of what is going on in the Middle East. Yet, the U.S. mainstream media mindlessly reprises Netanyahu's falsehood about Iran "gobbling up" nations.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book,

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