

## Defending the Iran Nuclear Deal -- Debate in Los Angeles Mirrors the National Debate.

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The famous adage of *thinking globally, but acting locally* applies to the current debate over US foreign policy toward Iran. This issue is hardly remote from Los Angeles, and the local press, including the *Jewish Journal* of Los Angeles, have opened up a serious debate on the proposed nuclear deal between Iran on one side, and the P5+1 countries on the other: the United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany. A “framework” for a final agreement was announced on April 2. [The LA Times](#) immediately supported the deal and called for giving it a chance. The [LA Daily News](#) noted the deal extracted critical concessions from Iran, but worried that it would project U.S. weakness.

Meanwhile the Los Angeles [Jewish Journal](#) strongly panned the deal in a [column by its publisher, David Suissa](#), who called the framework “a dangerous lemon.” But Suissa’s distorts most aspects of the framework agreement. To promote a serious local discussion over the US government’s rapprochement with Iran, I offer a counterpoint to his arguments.

Suissa starts by quoting Henry Kissinger and George Schultz that “What began as negotiations to prevent an Iranian capability to develop a nuclear arsenal are ending with an agreement that concedes this very capability.” But Suissa drops [the end of Kissinger and Schultz’s sentence](#) that says “albeit short of its full capacity in the first 10 years.” But that is critical caveat. Under twelve years of negotiations, Iran went from 100 to 19,000 centrifuges, but the framework agreement Iran is limited to just 5,000. Clearly the framework is cutting Iran’s enrichment capacity to the bone for the next decade, and even then an Iranian nuclear bomb will still be outlawed by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Suissa says that Iran was only “two or three months” from nuclear breakout (“breakout” meaning a country has already amassed enough 90% enriched uranium or plutonium to build one bomb). But despite his Chicken Little warnings, Iran was never a few months from breakout. Iran had a quantity of 20% enriched uranium before the [2013 “interim” agreement](#) which kick-started negotiations that eventually led to the April 2 framework agreement. But under the interim agreement, Iran agreed to neutralize its 20% enriched uranium and promised not to enrich above the 5% used in power reactors. To say the least, a significant effort is required to further enrich 20% uranium to the 90% level required to create a bomb.

As for the plutonium path, [Iran agreed to reconfigure its Arak heavy water reactor](#) cutting plutonium production to less than 1 kg a year – far less than the amount required for breakout.

Suissa acknowledges that the framework extends Iran's breakout time to over a year, but belittles that difference, claiming that no matter what inspection protocol is in place, Iran will still cheat. Not only is there no evidence that Iran will cheat on inspections, but according to Israel's newspaper of record, *Ha'Aretz*, [Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said his real fear is that Iran will abide by the agreement](#). In fact, Suissa reaches the belief that Iran will cheat because that is what Israel did when it [misled the United States and even France](#) about its nuclear reactor in Dimona. [Since Israel cheated to develop its nuclear bombs](#), Suissa assumes that Iran has its same low standards and will, therefore, also cheat.

Then Suissa discounts the ten-year inspection schedule, quoting Marc Theissen to suggest that at the end of that interval Iran will turn its nuclear program inside out in a matter of days. He says that Iran will not have to dismantle any of its nuclear facilities, but Suissa [does not acknowledge](#) that under the negotiated framework, Iran must convert its facility at Fordow so it can no longer be used to enrich uranium. Furthermore, enrichment at Iran's Natanz site will be limited to 3.67%, using outdated centrifuges. Finally, no new enrichment facilities can be built under the deal.

Suissa copies former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to say that bombing Iran's nuclear facilities will be more like the assassination of Osama bin Laden than the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Not likely according to all military experts, [including Israel's](#). Even limited airstrikes would require [a massive military operation](#) that would start with American warplanes destroying Iran's air defense capabilities using "long-range bombers, drones, electronic warfare, land-based fighter bombers, carrier aircraft, and submarine-launched cruise missiles." Follow-on airstrikes would then destroy known nuclear facilities, a military action far beyond Israel's capabilities. Finally, the introduction of the [Russian S-300 air defense system in Iran](#) further complicates any aerial attack on Iran's nuclear facilities

Suissa follows David Horowitz to argue that under the deal "thousands of centrifuges are to be allowed to keep on spinning." That is true in one sense. The deal allows Iran to use 5,000 older models to enrich uranium and another 1,000 for research only. What Suissa does not realize is that today Iran has about 19,000 centrifuges, many with up-to-date technology, so the deal reduces Iran's enrichment capability to a small fraction of what it has today because of earlier international failures to reach a negotiated settlement with Iran.

Suissa insinuates that Obama is going for this "bad deal" because he is desperate to achieve a foreign policy success. We hope that is the case. The deal that Obama is negotiating stops

Iran from building a nuclear bomb, if that was even Iran's intention, [a conclusion challenged by both US and Israel intelligence agencies.](#)

Finally, Suissa worries that Iran will eventually attempt to develop a nuclear bomb. I share that worry. The ultimate driver for Iran to build a nuclear bomb is [Israel's arsenal of 100 or more nuclear bombs](#), as well as [its endless threats to attack Iran](#). What is needed is a Middle East nuclear-free zone. But we doubt Suissa would support that because it would mean that Israel would be required to give up its [arsenal of nuclear bombs](#).

In this violent part of the world, diplomacy is the only way to stop a technologically sophisticated country like Iran from developing nuclear bombs to match Israel's nuclear arsenal. Obama is well aware that, at most, bombing will only delay Iran for a 2-4 year period, while giving Iran an unchallengeable right to develop nuclear weapons.

While this debate might seem remote in Los Angeles, I think it is important enough for us to not only closely follow the issues, but do all we can to avert another Middle Eastern conflagration.

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