

The Smartest Guys in the Room Are the Ones Getting It Wrong

By Marc Erlbaum - August 13, 2015



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For those who believe that the proposed Iran deal is a consummate and historic miscarriage of foreign policy, the question must be posed as to why President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry and their administration agreed to it, and why they are trying so vehemently to sell it if it is so bad?

Are they stupid? Have they been out-maneuvered? Do they have some covert Manchurian Candidate ploy against the country they purport to defend?

Obama and Kerry, along with the rest of the administration, are certainly not stupid. And while there will always be no lack of conspiracy theorists who question their motives, let us assume that they are not only patriots, but good men who want the best for their country and for the world.

So then: Why?

Because they truly believe that the global realignment of power that this deal represents will create a more stable world. Rather than one superpower serving in the role of global watchdog and bearing the immense burden of dealing with angry flare-ups time and again, wouldn't it be preferable to create a situation of global empowerment in which many forces share power and responsibility?

Makes sense, right? The basic schoolyard psychology at play here is the notion that if you make your enemy feel respected and dignified, he will no longer feel the need to fight you because you will be esteemed equals. Then you can work together to empower and dignify the other kids on the playground, and everyone will get along just fine. It's a beautiful and enlightened ideology.

But what if the global playground is not the same as our local schoolyard? What if the culture in our yard is vastly divergent from theirs, and the rules and assumptions we are playing by do not apply?

The problem would be not our intentions, but the foisting of our own peaceful ideology onto a regime that is not similarly interested in peace. Can we change them by welcoming them into a

new paradigm? That is clearly Obama's hope. But what if his hope is unfounded? Then suddenly we have given the murderer the knife to stab us.

We have all heard apocryphal stories of people who have been brave enough to bare their necks to their enemies, and this courageous act has caused the enemy to respect this gallant warrior and drop his weapon in a new spirit of conciliation. It is a spectacular concept.

But what if the enemy is not as civilized as we hope? What if he is pursuing a deeply entrenched religious ideology that impels him to believe that he is in a timeless war of civilizations, and that the only way to usher in the time of "true peace" is by annihilating those who do not subscribe to his beliefs and mandates? He will identify your capitulation as weakness rather than strength. And he will cut off your head, as we have unfortunately witnessed with increasing regularity over the past several years.

Obama's plan for peace may be very well intentioned. But that does not make it right. The problem is that it is an attempt to neutralize an enemy by equalizing him and thus making him a friend. However, by equalizing him, you are instilling him with the power to neutralize you by ending your life, as well as the lives of millions of others who do not comply with his imperialistic worldview.

The deal is a misreading of our foe in the unsubstantiated belief that he wants to be our ally as much as we want to be his. It is ignoring the well-documented history of mass murder and deception that the Iranian regime has applied not only to its enemies, but also to its own repressed people.

Obama and his administration are weary of American dominance. They are ashamed of our past actions, which they deem imperialistic, and they believe it is time to share the wealth and the power.

What they fail to understand, on account of their genuine desire for reconciliation and global unity, is that the other players in this drama are not similarly disinterested in hegemony. On the contrary, they are quite interested in dominating others and imposing their control. They are licking their chops for the power vacuum that we are creating by abdicating our seat of authority.

The civilized nations of the world are in agreement that we as a planet need to create a new paradigm of unity and cooperation. After all, we are one species and we are sharing this small and precious Earth and therefore must come together to look after it, and each other, responsibly.

We can't blame Obama for being an ideologue and man of peaceful vision, but we cannot allow him to endanger all of us by funding and arming a fanatical and murderous regime in his misguided attempt to make this a more harmonious world.

Neville Chamberlain's genuine desire for "peace in our time" certainly did not result in it. Sadly, good wishes do not always affect good outcomes. Opposition to the proposed Iran deal must not be mistaken for malice or belligerence or warmongering. It is quite possible to believe in the administration's admirable aims, but protest its faulty and dangerous means.

Smart and righteous people can be wrong. It doesn't make them stupid or evil. The question is whether we will allow them to be wrong with our very lives in the balance.

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