

Obama at AIPAC

[Kevin MacDonald](#) on March 4, 2012

Obama is clearly dragging his heels on Iran. What the NYTimes called Obama's "[defensive speech](#)" at AIPAC today reiterated US commitment to diplomacy and sanctions, while at the same time emphasizing his record of strong support for Israel. But it's not going to be enough to please his masters. The Lobby wants the US to go to war and they don't seem to want to wait even until after the election to get it. Obama, doubtless thinking of the disastrous effects on the economy and therefore his chances in the election, would at least prefer to wait. Perhaps I'm naive, but I believe him when he says he doesn't want to preside over yet more dead and wounded Americans returning from the Middle East.

In any case, there is little reason to think that Obama can withstand the pressure. Remember last year, when he offended the Lobby by talking about the 1967 borders: It quickly became apparent that the US could not pressure Israel on the settlements or anything else:

Tensions have been high between Obama and Netanyahu for over two years, but Israel hasn't changed its behavior at all, indeed [announcing](#) 1500 more housing units in East Jerusalem timed to coincide with Netanyahu's visit. ... By 2012, it will likely be obvious that Obama's remarks haven't really changed things for Israel, with the result that Jews will continue to focus on their domestic agenda of supporting White dispossession via funding and supporting the Democratic Party as the party of ethnic grievance and multiculturalism, maybe with a slight decline from the ~80% of Jews who voted for Obama in 2008. It is possible that defection of some Jews (combined with somewhat less enthusiasm by Jewish donors and Jews in the media) could influence the 2012 election in close states like Florida and thereby have a major effect on the outcome. See "[Obama Offends the Lobby](#)," 5/21/2011)

As the [Guardian noted](#), the response was tepid:

The audience didn't love the speech. The president was met with respectful applause. But many Aipac delegates and supporters must now be hoping that Netanyahu can get more out of Obama when they meet at the White House tomorrow.

This of course is a grand opening for the Republicans, foreshadowed by [sparring](#) between Liz Cheney representing the Republicans and Jane Harmon defending the Obama Administration. In his speech, Obama mentioned the expected pro-war comments by Republican presidential candidates who will be speaking in the coming days. The usual competition for the approval of the Israel Lobby.

The *NYTimes* article mentions that Obama's speech reflects "the wariness among American intelligence and foreign policy officials about repeating the mistakes of the Iraq war" without mentioning the decisive role of the Israel Lobby in that disaster. And surely there are quite a few people in the US defense/intelligence establishment who remember the intelligence reports cooked up by Israel-firsters like Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith and Abraham Shulsky in the Office of Special Plans in the Defense Department.

It also interesting that there was no mention of the Palestinians. One clear effect of the emphasis on Iran by the Israel Lobby has been to make everyone ignore that the dispossession of the Palestinians continues apace. In the current atmosphere, no US politician would dare utter even a peep about Israel's settlement policy, two state solutions, or peace talks with the Palestinians. Whatever the eventual result, the Lobby gains by taking all of these issues off the table.

I suspect that Israel's goal is not really to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. They have already whittled the criterion down to the hopelessly vague criterion of being capable of producing a nuclear weapon rather than actually possessing one. And now they are insisting that Iran agree to halt all enrichment of uranium, which obviously won't happen.

They want a war, period. I suspect they would like to inflict massive damage on Iran's infrastructure and cause suffering by civilians, as they did in the war in Lebanon in 2006. Iran, with or without nuclear weapons, is a thorn in Israel's side—a strong supporter of the Palestinians and of anti-Israel groups like Hezbollah. From their point of view, it's more than enough reason to punish them and set them back economically as much as possible.