

Letter to Financial Times, March 4, 2015

Netanyahu was right to speak out after Obama's shift in dealings with Iran

Sir, Your editorial "[Netanyahu's brazen challenge to Obama](#)" (March 4) incorrectly states the alternative to Barack Obama's Iran deal, saying that "only a complete gutting of Iran's civil nuclear capacity" could prevent it from developing the capacity to build nuclear warheads and the ballistic missiles to deliver them.

The Obama administration had long assured Israel that its goal in negotiating with Iran was to prevent Iran from acquiring the capacity to build and deploy a nuclear bomb. That could be achieved by denying Iran the right to enrich uranium, so that its civil nuclear programme must be confined to, say, providing electricity to Iranian homes, not by "gutting" its use of nuclear power altogether, as you wrongly state.

The problem is that the administration reneged on this promise and in the negotiations with Iran has adopted the view that if allowed eventually to acquire a nuclear bomb and capacity to deliver it, albeit under controlled conditions (which may not actually be enforceable), Iran will evolve into a responsible regional power. Given Iran's history as a primary state sponsor of terrorism, this view is at best naive and from Israel's security concerns also dangerous.

Mr Obama made this shift not so much out of a misty idealism but because he views Iran as a potential US ally. Already in Iraq, Iran is acting as a military surrogate in the fight against Isis, for instance, as the pentagon stands aside. So in order to cover an American military retreat, which we find occurring in every theatre, Mr Obama has made concessions to Iran in the nuclear talks which, frankly, smack of appeasement and will make the likelihood of war in the region greater. Had he held firm to the original assurances he gave Israel concerning his approach to the Iran nuclear talks, Benjamin Netanyahu would have found no need to speak to Congress. Brazen or not, the Israeli prime minister was right to do so.