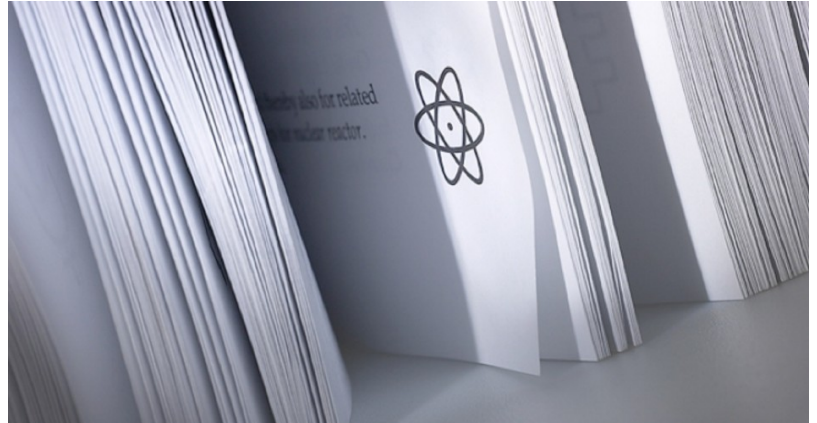




Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 24, 2012

Senate Iran Resolution: De Facto Declaration of War?

For 26 minutes last Friday night, the sound of war drums reverberating through the Senate chamber were silenced as [Senator Rand Paul \(R-Ky.\) stood and delivered a speech](#) that served as a vehicle for filibuster and a voice of warning against military intervention in yet another Middle Eastern country. “I think a vote for this resolution is a vote for the concept of preemptive war,” Paul said.



[Senate Resolution 41](#) is a non-binding measure originally introduced in February and sponsored by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), Bob Casey (D-Penn.), and Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.). The [Senate passed the resolution late Friday night/early Saturday](#) morning by a vote of 90-1. Senator Paul was the lone dissenting voice.

In a statement released prior to the vote on his resolution, Graham argued for its passage. “If Iran is ever allowed to obtain nuclear weapons capability, containment will be almost impossible,” Graham wrote. “My biggest fear is the radical Iranian regime, led by Ahmadinejad, would share nuclear technology with terrorist organizations,” said Graham. “We would be under serious threat of attack and close allies like Israel would never know a minute’s peace. In addition, Sunni Arab states in the region would almost certainly seek a nuclear capability of their own to counter Iran,” he added.

Graham noted later in the press release that President Obama and Governor Romney “both reject the policy of containing a nuclear-armed Iran.”

Containment, as defined by the resolution is “the strategy of trying to prevent the expansion or invasion of countries.” Graham’s resolution declares that this “will never be our policy with regard to Iran.”

Senator Paul considers such a statement unwise. “This means that right now, before anything happens, you’ve decided that you will preemptively go to war,” Paul said.

Fox News disagrees. In a story reporting the Senate’s overwhelming support for the Graham resolution, the 24-hour news channel insists that the vote “should not be construed as an authorization for the use of military force or a declaration of war.”

Despite denials that this resolution will be used to justify armed intervention in Iran, similar soft-pedaling was heard after September 11, 2001, and American troops are still dying in the Middle East 11 years later.

Graham’s resolution specifically states that the United States will not “rely on containment of a nuclear weapons-capable Iran.” If we refuse to consider containment (something we do with regard North Korea, India, Pakistan, and Russia), we are left with no other option but to prevent Tehran’s development of a nuclear weapon.

Currently, the United States relies on sanctions as a deterrence to Iran’s pursuit of development of nuclear weapons.

“I have voted for sanctions on Iran and don’t think it’s a good idea that Iran have nuclear weapons,”



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Senator Paul said at the beginning of his speech.

Graham doesn't think sanctions are working and worries about the fate of the world where Iran is a nuclear power. "Sanctions and diplomacy are two ways to stop Iran, and I am hopeful that they work," Graham said. "However, the current sanctions are affecting Iran's economy but not changing their behavior regarding their nuclear ambitions."

"Time is running out and tonight's vote will be a strong statement by the United States Senate that we will not allow Iran to possess nuclear weapons capability," concluded Graham.

Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) agreed and was pleased by the efforts of Graham and others to derail Tehran's nuclear program. [During debate on the resolution](#) Blumenthal said, "We know that Iran would create access for terrorists — access for them — to these nuclear weapons, making the Middle East a nuclear tinbox. We cannot trust this regime. We know that fact beyond any potential doubt."

There were others happy to hear of the Senate's war-like resolve.

An article published by the *Jerusalem Post* quotes an unnamed Israeli government official saying, "The government welcomes the bipartisan support Israel receives in Congress."

The [American Israel Public Affairs Committee](#) (AIPAC), undoubtedly a member of what Senator Paul called the "tremendous lobbying apparatus" pushing for war with Iran, added its voice to the chorus praising the Senate's defense of Israel. "AIPAC applauds the Senate for rejecting a policy of containment of an Iranian nuclear weapons capability and calling for an increase in sanctions against the world's leading state sponsor of terror," the group said.

Passage of the resolution comes at a very convenient time for Israel. Recently Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been pressuring the United States "to draw a red line" which if Iran crosses would trigger an immediate military response from the United States. The passage of the Graham resolution is seen as the first sketch of a soon-to-be-much-brighter red line.

Netanyahu has not officially responded to the result of the vote on the resolution.

The Obama administration has thus far opposed the red-line gambit. Senator Graham's resolution urges "President Obama to reaffirm the unacceptability of an Iran with nuclear-weapons capability and oppose any policy that would rely on containment as an option in response to the Iranian nuclear threat."

As yet, the White House is unconvinced. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta [told *Foreign Policy Magazine*](#), "Red lines are kind of political arguments that are used to try to put people in a corner." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton similarly rejected the call for such restrictions on U.S. foreign policy.

Prime Minister Netanyahu was firm in his rebuke of such reluctance to fill the pen of policy with bright red ink. "Those in the international community who refuse to put red lines before Iran don't have a moral right to place a red light before Israel," he said.

Senator Paul sees a dangerously Orwellian "perpetual war" aspect in the resolution's steadfast declaration that the United States will never contain a nuclear Iran. "A country that vows to never contain an enemy is a country that vows to always preemptively attack," Paul said. Paraphrasing George Orwell's dystopian 1984, Paul said, "Yes, we've always been at war with East Asia or yes, we've always been at war with Eurasia. It's an idea that we will always be perpetually at war."

Citing the United States' ability to contain "a two-bit socialist dictatorship" like North Korea for over 50



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years, Paul wonders why we couldn't do so with Iran.

Making clear that he does not promote containment as a philosophy, he worries that his colleagues are not "thinking this through" and are committing the United States to yet another offensive war that will undoubtedly require the sacrifice of the blood of thousands of young American soldiers on the altar of global security. "I fear that we're pushing on. That every month there must be a new and more bellicose resolution. To ensure that we will go to war and that at all cost we will go to war in Iran," Paul said.

Several times throughout his speech on the Senate floor, Paul reminds his colleagues of the fact that for six decades the United States pursued a policy of containment with the former Soviet Union. Had the current corps of war drum beaters been around during the Cold War, there is little doubt that the world would have already witnessed the waging of World War III. This may be the path we're being pushed along by passage of this latest "de facto declaration of war."

The thought that we could have been plunged into an all-out war with the Soviet Union scares Senator Paul. What scares him more — and should scare everyone who rejects the strategy of preemptive war — is the reality that "so many members of this body are jumping up and down to embrace each other in the bipartisan desire" that we "absolutely will go to war if we wake up and Iran has nuclear weapons."

A question asked by Senator Paul and as yet unanswered is why so many members of the Senate and the House of Representatives — where a similar measure was passed in May — are so eager to send troops to die in defense of nothing.



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