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Debra Johanyak

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Premise:

- Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California) criticized Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to the U.S. Senate on March 3, 2015, and rejected his claims.

Context:

Minutes after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed a joint session of Congress with concerns about a proposed nuclear arms deal between the U.S. and Iran, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California) stated on CNN, which was widely reported by numerous news media, that the Prime Minister should "contain himself, because he has put out no real alternative." She termed his position against the proposed nuclear deal as "absolutist" and "not very helpful" without alternate suggestions. The only counter-argument Feinstein offered was that she believes the agreement does not threaten Israel's survival.

While Senator Feinstein's direct response to Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech is commendable in promptly and clearly stating her views of both the treaty and the speech, the logic may be somewhat questionable. Her belief that the Prime Minister should "contain himself" in the absence of providing a counter-proposal to the nuclear agreement suggests that a person should not speak against a perceived threat if one disagrees with the proposed prevention strategy. Thus, if I am a storeowner who notices a well-known thief casing my shop but am concerned that police will merely question the suspect without arresting him, I should not report my concerns unless I can devise a better strategy for preventing a possible robbery.

Anyone speaking against a proposal should have an alternative plan if possible. Yet, it may be enough to recognize a plan as either meaningful or meaningless without having a replacement proposal ready to offer. Netanyahu spoke to Congress in an effort to protect Israel against Iran's suspected goal of building nuclear arms. Senator Feinstein condemned Netanyahu's speech without offering an alternate plan to protect Israel, except to say that she does not believe Israel's survival is at risk. Is her condemnation of Netanyahu's speech more logical than his condemnation of the nuclear treaty?

About the Author

Debra Johanyak, Ph.D., is Professor of English at the University of Akron Wayne College and the author of several books, including *Behind the Veil: An American Woman's Memoir of the Iran Hostage Crisis*.

Her most recent work is [*Say What You Really Mean!*](#) (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 2014).

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Dr. Johanyak is Past President of the Ohio Association of Two-Year Colleges. She is also a produced playwright/filmmaker on historical and contemporary topics.