

November 2, 2014

Looking past the "chickenshit remark", [David Harsanyi](#) spots the really dangerous and insidious comment in The Atlantic article.

... But you know what is unmistakably anti-Israel? Gloating over how the United States has strong-armed Israel into living with a nuclear Iran, which seems like significant news to me:

This official agreed that Netanyahu is a 'chickenshit' on matters related to the comatose peace process, but added that he's also a 'coward' on the issue of Iran's nuclear threat. The official said the Obama administration no longer believes that Netanyahu would launch a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear facilities in order to keep the regime in Tehran from building an atomic arsenal. 'It's too late for him to do anything. Two, three years ago, this was a possibility. But ultimately he couldn't bring himself to pull the trigger. It was a combination of our pressure and his own unwillingness to do anything dramatic. Now it's too late.'

At the United Nations a few years, Obama reportedly offered to do whatever it took to prevent Iran from producing atomic weapons in exchange for Israeli assurances that it would not attack Iran's nuclear sites before the presidential election in 2012. (And to think, Obama officials have the audacity to whine about Netanyahu's "near-pathological desire for career-preservation.") One side kept its promise. Obama has repeatedly vowed, since his first run for president, to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear power. Maybe that promise that never should have been made. Now, though, the administration claims it's too late. Now it claims American pressure helped dissuade Israel from defending itself. And now, there is nothing Israel can do about it.

Knowing this, why anyone would expect Israel to trust John Kerry or Barack Obama to forge a peace deal with a Fatah-Hamas unity government is a mystery.

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Roger Simon noticed the same thing.

... But there is something of importance in Goldberg's article. Like me (we're on paragraph 5 here), he buried his lede. I learned about this through a tweet by [Brian Faughnan](#): Buried lede in that piece on Bibi: WH thinks Iran's nuke program pretty damn far along. Faughnan is referring to the following from Goldberg:

The official said the Obama administration no longer believes that Netanyahu would launch a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear facilities in order to keep the regime in Tehran from building an atomic arsenal. "It's too late for him to do anything. Two, three years ago, this was a possibility. But ultimately he couldn't bring himself to pull the trigger. It was a combination of our pressure and his own unwillingness to do anything dramatic. Now it's too late."

*Goldberg goes on to explain this proves Bibi is a "chickensh*t" (no, I'm not afraid to use profanity; read my novels. But those are the rules of this site...) because he didn't act against the mullahs two years ago, but what it really shows, to people genuinely interested, is that the administration assumes Iran is too close to the bomb to make an attack worth it. That is far more interesting and, needless to say dangerous, than anybody's opinion about Benjamin Netanyahu. ...*

David Bernstein in Volokh Conspiracy has more.

Jeffrey Goldberg has quoted an anonymous Obama Administration official as calling Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu a “chickenshit” because Bibi refuses to make bold moves for peace that might endanger his electoral prospects. Putting aside the incorrect use of the word chickenshit (which is not synonymous with “a chicken”), and the fact that it’s foolish to base a diplomatic strategy on assuming politicians won’t act like politicians, I think the underlying dynamic here reflects not just the general antipathy the Obama and Netanyahu administrations have for each other, but the continuing fallout from the Obama Administration’s initial gross misreading of the Israeli political scene.

Very succinctly, the Obama Administration came in to office thinking it could either force Netanyahu to make concessions, or force his government to fall. Both the Shamir and the first Netanyahu governments made concessions and ultimately got tossed out by the voters after tensions rose with the U.S., so this was not a completely unreasonable assumption.

However, Obama and his advisors missed several contrary factors. The Israeli public never liked Obama, never trusted him due to his well-known associations with various anti-Israel leftists such as Rashid Khalidi. Israelis’ impressions were solidified by major blunders made by the Obama Administration, which did not get much attention in the U.S., but did in Israel. ...

As does Jennifer Rubin.

... But Obama should have also already learned that challenging Netanyahu and insulting the Jewish state in this manner has one definite side effect: strengthening the prime minister’s political position at home. The same thing happened after Obama’s attacks on the status of Jerusalem in his first term. The administration thought it could topple Netanyahu soon after his election in February 2009 and failed, but even after his election to another term in 2013 as well as the absence of any viable alternative to him, they are still clinging to the delusion that the Israeli people will reject his policies. But that isn’t likely to happen for one reason. The overwhelming majority of Israelis may not love the prime minister but they share his belief that there is no Palestinian peace partner and that turning the West Bank into a sovereign state that could be controlled by Hamas and other terrorists just like Gaza would be madness. They also oppose efforts to divide their capital or to prohibit Jews from the right to live in some parts of the city.

Netanyahu won’t back down. In the wake of the summer war with Hamas that further undermined an Israeli left that was already in ruins after 20 years of failed peace processing, Netanyahu was clearly heading to early elections that would further strengthen the Likud. Obama’s attacks will only make that strategy more attractive to the prime minister. But whether he is reelected in 2015, 2016, or 2017, few believe Netanyahu won’t be returned to office by the voters for his third consecutive and fourth overall term as Israel’s leader. Though a lot of damage can be done to Israel in the next two years, that means Netanyahu is almost certain to be able to outlast Obama in office and to enjoy what will almost certainly be better relations with his successor whether it is a Democrat or a Republican. Waiting out Obama isn’t a good strategy for Israel but it may be the only one it has available to it and will likely be rewarded with a honeymoon with the next president. ...

Seth Mandel also noticed the real meat of the article.

The silliness of President Mom Jeans calling an Israeli special forces veteran “chickens–t” was what first dominated the reactions of the Obama administration’s frat-house taunts directed at Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. But the larger strategic impact of the insult, as passed through what Matthew Continetti has termed the “secretarial” press, this time via Jeffrey Goldberg, soon became apparent. And it has now been confirmed by a major story in the Wall Street Journal.

It was easy at first to miss anything but the string of insults directed from Obama to Netanyahu, including the casual accusation of autism. (It’s arguable whether this represented a new low for the president, who has a habit of demonstrating his grade school playground vocabulary.) But once the initial shock at the further degrading of American statecraft under Obama wore off, it was easy to see the real purpose of the story. The Obama administration wanted to brag through its stenographer that the president had protected the Iranian nuclear program from Israel:

I ran this notion by another senior official who deals with the Israel file regularly. This official agreed that Netanyahu is a “chickenshit” on matters related to the comatose peace process, but added that he’s also a “coward” on the issue of Iran’s nuclear threat. The official said the Obama administration no longer believes that Netanyahu would launch a preemptive strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities in order to keep the regime in Tehran from building an atomic arsenal. “It’s too late for him to do anything. Two, three years ago, this was a possibility. But ultimately he couldn’t bring himself to pull the trigger. It was a combination of our pressure and his own unwillingness to do anything dramatic. Now it’s too late.”

If Iran goes nuclear, those words will be the perfect description of the Obama administration’s fecklessness: “Now it’s too late.” ...

Perhaps the strangest thing about Israeli/American problems now is that Israel has more Arab friends now than ever before.

Evelyn Gordon writes on how obama's policies are so twentieth century.

The inaugural session of the Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate took place last week, with scholars coming from around the world to participate in two days of discussion on a plethora of topics. Hisham Melhem, the Washington bureau chief for Al Arabiya News, subsequently published a lengthy summary of the proceedings on Al Arabiya’s website, and reading it, I was struck by the absence of certain topics one might expect to feature prominently. Egypt, Iran, oil, ISIS, Turkey, Russia, the U.S., and Islamic extremism were all there. But in 1,700 words, the Palestinians weren’t mentioned once, while Israel appeared only in the very last paragraph—which deserves to be read in full:

Finally, it was fascinating to attend a two day conference about the Middle East in times of upheaval in which Israel was mostly ignored, with the only frontal criticism of her policies delivered by an American diplomat.

And this explains a lot about the current U.S.-Israel spat. President Barack Obama entered office with the firm belief that the best way to improve America’s relations with the Muslim world was to create “daylight” between the U.S. and Israel, and for six years now, he and his staff have worked diligently to do exactly that. Nor was this an inherently unreasonable idea: Even a decade ago, Arab capitals might have cheered the sight of U.S. officials hurling childish insults at their Israeli counterparts. ...

Zev Chafets says chickens know who's a lame duck.

... A "senior White House official" told Atlantic correspondent Jeffery Goldberg that the Israeli prime minister is "a chickens***," because he is afraid to make peace according to American specifications. "The only thing he's interested in is protecting himself from political defeat." The anonymous official said fearlessly. "[Netanyahu] is not Rabin. He's not Sharon. He's certainly no Begin. He's got no guts."

This American nostalgia for Menachem Begin made me laugh out loud. Having served as one of his press spokesmen for five years I vividly recall the campaign of personal vilification waged against him by the Carter administration.

We constantly heard reports of senior White House officials calling Begin a terrorist, a fascist, a war monger, a lunatic and a delusional religious fanatic. All off the record, of course. ...

... At the moment, Barack Obama and his anonymous senior officials may be madder than wet hens. But they are lame ducks who are likely to be lamer after next Tuesday's election.

There is no reason to give in to U.S. pressure. After all, not even a chicken is scared of a lame duck.

The Federalist

Obama Administration Finally Identifies The Middle East's Biggest Problem: Israel

You know what is unmistakably anti-Israel? Gloating about how you've strong-armed the country into living with a nuclear Iran.

by David Harsanyi

The Atlantic's Jeffery Goldberg has written a piece [detailing the deteriorating relationship between Israel and the Obama administration](#). The chief purpose of Goldberg's piece is to humiliate Benjamin Netanyahu. None of this is especially shocking, considering the antagonism the administration has shown towards the Jewish State from the start. It's the sort of antipathy Goldberg identified as [Jewish paranoia](#) back in 2008.

Goldberg begins his piece with the following:

The other day I was talking to a senior Obama administration official about the foreign leader who seems to frustrate the White House and the State Department the most. 'The thing about Bibi is, he's a chickenshit,' this official said, referring to the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, by his nickname.

Most people have focused on the name-calling, and Goldberg keeps a list of pejoratives used by U.S. officials to describe Netanyahu, including "aspergery." On that front, it's worth noting that the person being repeatedly being called "chickenshit" by an anonymous officials volunteered for the Israeli Defense Force, saw combat, and was the leader of an elite special-forces unit deployed on numerous missions, including the freeing of hijacked Sabena Flight in 1972, where he was shot.

Granted, this might not be as courageous as hopping the Amtrak from Delaware to DC each day or rallying the troops at a fundraiser in Greenwich, but God knows we can't all be heroes.

Is Netanyahu a *political* coward? Perhaps. But not for any of the reasons offered by the administration. Is he arrogant? I'm sure he is. Is being anti-Netanyahu tantamount to being anti-Israel? Well, no. Though it's certainly fair to point out that the administration's public demeaning of an ally's elected leader—almost certainly with the blessing of higher ups—is nearly unheard of.

But you know what is unmistakably anti-Israel? Gloating over how the United States has strong-armed Israel into living with a nuclear Iran, which seems like significant news to me:

This official agreed that Netanyahu is a 'chickenshit' on matters related to the comatose peace process, but added that he's also a 'coward' on the issue of Iran's nuclear threat. The official said the Obama administration no longer believes that Netanyahu would launch a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear facilities in order to keep the regime in Tehran from building an atomic arsenal. 'It's too late for him to do anything. Two, three years ago, this was a possibility. But ultimately he couldn't bring himself to pull the trigger. It was a combination of our pressure and his own unwillingness to do anything dramatic. Now it's too late.'

At the United Nations a few years ago, Obama reportedly offered to do whatever it took to prevent Iran from producing atomic weapons [in exchange for Israeli assurances that it would not attack Iran's nuclear sites before the presidential election in 2012](#). (And to think, Obama officials have the audacity to whine about Netanyahu's "near-pathological desire for career-preservation.") One side kept its promise. Obama has repeatedly vowed, since his first run for president, to stop Iran [from becoming a nuclear power](#). Maybe that promise that never should have been made. Now, though, the administration claims it's too late. Now it claims American pressure helped dissuade Israel from defending itself. And now, there is nothing Israel can do about it.

Knowing this, why anyone would expect Israel to trust John Kerry or Barack Obama to forge a peace deal with a Fatah-Hamas unity government is a mystery.

Israel isn't completely innocent in this mess, of course. Cabinet member Moshe Ya'alon, for instance, [was quoted](#) referring to Kerry as "obsessive and messianic" earlier this year. But Ya'alon has since apologized a number of times. But earlier this month Ya'alon was in Washington—the *defense minister* of our closest ally in the Middle East—and his requests to meet with senior members of the Obama administration were declined. The administration waited until the visit ended before [leaking the snub to humiliate the Israeli defense minister](#). It's the sort of thing that's [been going on since 2008](#).

So what happens next? Well, considering his access, when Goldberg "imagines" what's coming, I imagine someone in the know told him what to imagine. So, if Abbas asks for recognition of Palestine in the United Nations, as he's expected to do again, the United States will likely block the initiative in the Security Council. But, as Goldberg notes, the Obama administration may also participate in a "stridently anti-settlement resolution" that would isolate Israel from the international community and pressure it to create a *judenfrei* West Bank and an indefensible Jerusalem.

Now, that would be anti-Israel, too.

Netanyahu, and the even more hawkish ministers around him, seem to have decided that their short-term political futures rest on a platform that can be boiled down to this formula: 'The whole world is against us. Only we can protect Israel from what's coming.' For an Israeli public traumatized by Hamas violence and anti-Semitism, and by fear that the chaos and brutality of the

Arab world will one day sweep over them, this formula has its charms. But for Israel's future as an ally of the United States, this formula is a disaster.

Not really. It's unlikely we're going to elect another president driven by a similarly hostile inclination towards Israel. Maybe the American public will turn on Israel at some point, but that point isn't here yet. Even if it were, one imagines that any Israel government, Left or Right, would have to take its chances alone rather than participate in setting up another mini terror state on its border.

It must be very frustrating to believe that a nation acts in its own best interests rather than the interests of an American political party. Despite Bibi's assurances that he wouldn't mess with the president's 2012 campaign, it is he, out of all the leaders in the all the world, who frustrates Obama most. Not Russian autocrats who invade sovereign nations. Not genocidal Arab dictators. Netanyahu. I forget which sycophantic liberal pundit pointed out on Twitter that this makes sense since we're prone to be frustrated more by our friends than our enemies. For that to be true, one would have to accept the dubious notion that the president ever considered Israel a "friend" in any special sense.

Is there any other friend treated similarly? Trust me, you're never going to hear a senior State Department official refer to Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan as a chickenshit theocrat. In fact, when the United Arab Emirates and Turkey, both friends of ours in the Middle East, were justifiably called out by Joe Biden for their roles in helping to strengthen the Islamic State, the vice president [was quickly dispatched to ask for forgiveness](#) from both the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Turkish President Erdogan. Apologize to the leader of Turkey. Call the leader of Israel a coward. That about encapsulates American foreign policy the past few years.

Roger L. Simon

[Who's 'Chickenshit'? The Goldberg Variation](#)

In an already much talked about article for *The Atlantic*, "[The Crisis in U. S. – Israeli Relations is Officially Here](#)," Jeffrey Goldberg quotes a senior administration official accusing Benjamin Netanyahu – among a long list of unpleasant things — of being a "chickenshit."

Never mind for a moment the absurdity of an (of course anonymous) Obama official calling the Israeli PM a coward when Netanyahu has been personally [under fire in two wars](#), volunteering for the second after having been wounded by a gun shot in the first (his brother, as many will remember, was killed during the raid on Entebbe — both Netanyahus were in [Sayeret Matkal](#)) at approximately the time the official's boss Barry was lulling on a balmy Hawaiian beach smoking "choom" with his gang. What's the right word for this? Hypocrisy is a bit weak, isn't it? Or is it simply the desperate rumblings of a failed administration?

In any case, Goldberg was a "good boy" for transmitting it and I hope he gets another opportunity for a ["hard-hitting" interview with POTUS](#). I further hope the author achieves his ambition and restrains those bellicose Israelis from renting or buying apartments in Arab East Jerusalem. After all, the Arab countries have been so welcoming to their Jewish populations. Oh, wait... they're *Judenrein*, barely a single Jew in evidence. And Abu Mazen has refused ever to have Jews living within a future Palestinian state. My mistake. Never mind again. I'm sure Goldberg omitted all this by accident.

Actually, ninety percent of his article is on the level of dog bites man. We all know Obama *et al* don't like the Israelis, not just their prime minister and his supposedly loose-lipped defense minister

Yaalon, and probably a whole host of other officials of the Jewish state, not to mention a vast percentage of the Israeli populace. This opprobrium on Obama's part has been going on for a long time, even before he took office. (Remember the still mysterious [Khalidi tape?](#))

But there is something of importance in Goldberg's article. Like me (we're on paragraph 5 here), he buried his lede. I learned about this through a tweet by [Brian Faughnan](#): *Buried lede in that piece on Bibi: WH thinks Iran's nuke program pretty damn far along.* Faughnan is referring to the following from Goldberg:

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Moreover, if you're looking for a coward, how about the man who said nothing several years ago when the demonstrators in the streets of Tehran we're shouting "Obama, Obama, are you with us or are you with them?"

That is a genuine "chickensh*t." Or someone on the side of Islamofascism. What do you think about that, Jeffrey Goldberg?

Volokh Conspiracy

[Some background to the "Chickenshit" controversy](#)

by David Bernstein

Jeffrey Goldberg has quoted an anonymous Obama Administration official as calling [Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu a "chickenshit"](#) because Bibi refuses to make bold moves for peace that might endanger his electoral prospects. Putting aside the incorrect use of the word chickenshit (which is not synonymous with "a chicken"), and the fact that it's foolish to base a diplomatic strategy on assuming politicians won't act like politicians, I think the underlying dynamic here reflects not just the general antipathy the Obama and Netanyahu administrations have for each other, but the continuing fallout from the Obama Administration's initial gross misreading of the Israeli political scene.

Very succinctly, the Obama Administration came in to office thinking it could either [force Netanyahu to make concessions](#), or force his government to fall. Both the Shamir and the first Netanyahu governments made concessions and ultimately got tossed out by the voters after tensions rose with the U.S., so this was not a completely unreasonable assumption.

However, Obama and his advisors missed several contrary factors. The Israeli public never liked Obama, never trusted him due to his well-known associations with various anti-Israel leftists such as Rashid Khalidi. Israelis' impressions were solidified by major blunders made by the Obama Administration, which did not get much attention in the U.S., but did in Israel. First, the Obama

Administration informed the Israeli government that written assurances given to it by the Bush Administration about U.S. policy, given in response to prior Israeli concessions, were null and void. One of those assurances was that Israel would keep major settlement blocs in any peace deal, an assurance that ran counter to Obama's first major initiative, a total settlement freeze. Undermining the promises of a president who was very popular in Israel, and making it clear that assurances from American governments have a very short expiration date, was not a way to win over Israeli public opinion.

Second, Obama went to Cairo in 2009, and not only didn't visit Israel during his trip, but presented a narrative that Obama thought was sympathetic to Israel in that it invoked the Holocaust as showing the need for a Jewish state, but hit Israeli ears as adopting the Arab narrative that Jews are not indigenous to the area, but were only given a state in the Middle East to compensate for European Christian crimes.

The very popular (in Israel) Bill Clinton confronting an only mildly popular Netanyahu in 1998 played very differently in Israel than a very unpopular Obama confronting a popular Netanyahu over the last several years. And unlike in the Bush I and Clinton years, many in Congress vocally favored Netanyahu's position, giving the president even less leverage.

I think the Obama Administration assumed Israelis that even if Israelis didn't swoon over Obama as much of the rest of the world did back in 2009, given Obama's close ties to and huge support within the American Jewish community Israelis would presume good will, and that Obama therefore did not need to schmooze the Israeli public. These assumptions proved wildly incorrect.

The Obama Administration also seemed to be caught off-guard by the fact that since the late 1990s, with one Intifada, one war in Lebanon, and one war in Gaza under their belts, all following previous Israeli withdrawals, Israeli public opinion had hardened against unilateral concessions, even when backed by the United States. (Note also that Netanyahu ultimately did agree to temporary settlement freeze, but Abbas then refused to negotiate until the last minute, and yet the Administration wasn't nearly as critical of Abbas as of Netanyahu. Israelis noticed.)

Finally, there have been comments from Administration officials showing that suggest a very shallow understanding of Israeli politics. The most telling such comment is when an Obama Administration official in 2012 made the nonsensical assertion that [Netanyahu is "essentially a Republican."](#) Charitably, this means that at least some in the Administration think about Netanyahu as a political enemy, which, moreover, is consistent with a remark made by Obama to Jewish leaders in 2008, [to the effect that being pro-Israel doesn't mean being pro-Likud](#), which happens to be Netanyahu's party. Uncharitably, it means that the nuances of Israeli politics, even the fact that you absolutely can't coherently map Israeli politics onto American political divisions, are completely lost on them.

One could write an equally long post on the way the Israeli government has misjudged and misplayed its hand with regard to the Obama Administration. But from the administration's side, they expected Netanyahu either to concede to American wishes (i.e., "make bold moves for peace"), or be voted out by the Israeli electorate. Instead, Netanyahu has managed to stay his own course, and still is in no danger of losing his parliamentary majority. Hence administration frustration and "chickenshit."

UPDATE: FWIW, I don't think any concessions by Netanyahu would have made a difference, because I don't think the Palestinians are willing to concede the "right of return", and therefore there can be no deal. Nevertheless, to the extent the Obama Administration was banking on Netanyahu making "heroic" concessions a la Begin and the Sinai, what was their backup plan?

Right Turn

The Consequences of a “Chickenshit” Policy

by Jonathan S. Tobin

No doubt the gang in the Obama administration have been congratulating themselves for planting some juicy insults aimed at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in [Jeffrey Goldberg's latest column in *The Atlantic*](#). But now that the wiseacres in the West Wing and/or the State Department [have done their dirty work](#) the question remains what will be the consequences of the decision to widen as well as to embitter the breach between the two countries. While most of those writing on this subject, including Goldberg, have emphasized the real possibility that the U.S. will sandbag Israel at the United Nations and otherwise undermine the Jewish state's diplomatic position in the last years of Obama's term in office, that won't be the only blowback from the administration's "chickenshit" diplomacy. Rather than harm Netanyahu, this ploy, like previous attacks on the prime minister, will strengthen him while making mischief for the president's party in both this year's midterms and in 2016.

There is no doubt that Obama's lame duck years will be stressful for Israel and its friends. [As Seth noted earlier today](#), the administration's full court press for détente with Iran is setting the table for a strategic blunder on their nuclear quest that will severely harm the balance of power in the Middle East as well as lay the groundwork for challenges to American national security for decades to come.

Nor should anyone discount the potential for severe damage to Israel's diplomatic standing in the world should Obama decide to collude with the Palestinian Authority and to allow them to get a United Nations Security Council resolution on Palestinian statehood, borders, and Jerusalem. The Palestinians' drive to annul Jewish rights and to bypass the peace process could, with Obama's support, further isolate Israel and strengthen the efforts of those forces working to promote BDS—boycott, divest, sanction—campaigns that amount to an economic war on the Jewish people.

This is a dire prospect for a small, besieged country that still relies heavily on U.S. security cooperation and defense aid. But for all the huffing and puffing on the part of Obama's minions, the administration's real objectives in all this plotting are not likely to be achieved. That's because nothing published in a Goldberg column or leaked anywhere else will weaken Netanyahu's hold on office or prompt the Palestinians to make peace or Iran to be more reasonable in the nuclear talks. The only people who will be hurt by the attacks on Israel are Obama's fellow Democrats.

As I pointed out yesterday, Obama's barbs aimed at Israel haven't enticed the Palestinians to negotiate seriously in the past and won't do so in the future. If the Palestinian Authority really wanted a state they would have accepted the one offered them in 2000, 2001, or 2008 or actually negotiated with Netanyahu in the last year after he indicated readiness to sign off on a two-state solution.

The boasts about having maneuvered Netanyahu into a position where he may not have a viable military option against Iran (actually, Israel may never have had much of an option since it can be argued that only U.S. possesses the forces required to conclusively knock out Iran's nuclear facilities) is also nothing for the U.S. to be happy about since it will only strengthen the Iranians' conviction that they have nothing to fear from Israel or a U.S. president that they think is too weak to stand up to them.

But Obama should have also already learned that challenging Netanyahu and insulting the Jewish state in this manner has one definite side effect: strengthening the prime minister's political position at home. The same thing happened after Obama's attacks on the status of Jerusalem in his first term. The administration thought it could topple Netanyahu soon after his election in February 2009 and failed, but even after his election to another term in 2013 as well as the absence of any viable alternative to him, they are still clinging to the delusion that the Israeli people will reject his policies. But that isn't likely to happen for one reason. The overwhelming majority of Israelis may not love the prime minister but they share his belief that there is no Palestinian peace partner and that turning the West Bank into a sovereign state that could be controlled by Hamas and other terrorists just like Gaza would be madness. They also oppose efforts to divide their capital or to prohibit Jews from the right to live in some parts of the city.

Netanyahu [won't back down](#). In the wake of the summer war with Hamas that further undermined an Israeli left that was already in ruins after 20 years of failed peace processing, Netanyahu was clearly heading to early elections that would further strengthen the Likud. Obama's attacks will only make that strategy more attractive to the prime minister. But whether he is reelected in 2015, 2016, or 2017, few believe Netanyahu won't be returned to office by the voters for his third consecutive and fourth overall term as Israel's leader. Though a lot of damage can be done to Israel in the next two years, that means Netanyahu is almost certain to be able to outlast Obama in office and to enjoy what will almost certainly be better relations with his successor whether it is a Democrat or a Republican. Waiting out Obama isn't a good strategy for Israel but it may be the only one it has available to it and will likely be rewarded with a honeymoon with the next president.

But Netanyahu isn't the only person who will profit politically from this astonishingly crude assault on the Jewish state's democratically elected leader.

Foreign policy is rarely a decisive factor in U.S. elections but at a time when Democrats are suffering the ill effects of Obama's inept response to the threat from ISIS, it won't do the president's party any good for the administration to pick a fight with its sole democratic ally in the Middle East. Americans have a right to ask why an administration that was slow to react to ISIS and is intent on appeasing a murderous Islamist regime in Iran is so intent on fighting with Israel. That won't help embattled Democrats seeking reelection in red states where evangelicals regard backing for Israel as a key issue.

Nor will it help Democrats as they head toward 2016. Though Hillary Clinton will likely run away from Obama on his attacks on Netanyahu as she has done on other foreign-policy issues, running for what will in effect be Obama's third term will still burden her with the need to either actively oppose the president's anti-Israel actions in the UN or détente with Iran or accept the negative political fallout of silence. Any Republican, with the exception of an isolationist like Rand Paul, will be able to exploit this issue to their advantage.

Those who worry about the damage to Israel from a lame-duck Obama administration that is seething with hatred for Netanyahu and thinks it has nothing to lose are not wrong. But Democrats will be hurt politically by a crisis that was created by Obama, not Netanyahu. They won't be grateful to the president for having put them in this fix while Netanyahu will probably emerge from this trial strengthened at home and in a good position to repair relations with Obama's successor.

Contentions

Frat-House Statecraft and U.S.-Iran Détente

by Seth Mandel

The silliness of President Mom Jeans calling an Israeli special forces veteran “chickens–t” was what first dominated the reactions of the Obama administration’s frat-house taunts directed at Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. But the larger strategic impact of the insult, as passed through what Matthew Continetti has [termed](#) the “secretarial” press, this time via [Jeffrey Goldberg](#), soon became apparent. And it has now been confirmed by a major story in the *Wall Street Journal*.

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If Iran goes nuclear, those words will be the perfect description of the Obama administration’s fecklessness: “Now it’s too late.” Too late, that is, for our allies like Israel and the Gulf states to protect themselves from the consequences of the Obama administration’s Mideast policies—which principally affect Israel and the Gulf states. But “fecklessness” may not be the right word. The *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) today that the president has been effective after all:

The Obama administration and Iran, engaged in direct nuclear negotiations and facing a common threat from Islamic State militants, have moved into an effective state of détente over the past year, according to senior U.S. and Arab officials.

The shift could drastically alter the balance of power in the region, and risks alienating key U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates who are central to the coalition fighting Islamic State. Sunni Arab leaders view the threat posed by Shiite Iran as equal to or greater than that posed by the Sunni radical group Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL.

Israel contends the U.S. has weakened the terms of its negotiations with Iran and played down Tehran’s destabilizing role in the region.

The Obama administration, then, has been carrying out its preferred policy: aligning with Iran in the Middle East. Now, this isn’t exactly surprising, since the administration has more or less telegraphed its pitches. Obama has also long been a doormat for the world’s tyrants, so adding Iran to the list that already includes states like Russia and Turkey adds a certain cohesiveness to White House policy.

Obama's infamous and towering ignorance of world affairs, especially in the Middle East, has always made this latest faceplant somewhat predictable. The Looney-Tunes outburst at Netanyahu was not, but it teaches us two important things about Obama.

First, those who wanted to support Obama but had no real case for him in 2008 went with the idea that he had a "presidential temperament." Those folks now look quite foolish—though that's nothing new. Obama has a temperament ill suited for any activity not readily found on frat row.

The second lesson is that the president's foreign policy is not abandonment of allies—that would be an improvement. It is, instead, full of tactics and strategies that, often unintentionally but no less destructively, put a thumb on the scale against them. For example, from the *Journal* piece:

The Obama administration also has markedly softened its confrontational stance toward Iran's most important nonstate allies, the Palestinian militant group Hamas and the Lebanese militant and political organization, Hezbollah. American diplomats, including Secretary of State John Kerry, negotiated with Hamas leaders through Turkish and Qatari intermediaries during cease-fire talks in July that were aimed at ending the Palestinian group's rocket attacks on Israel, according to senior U.S. officials.

The Iranian proxy terrorist groups on Israel's border will have a freer hand. It helps explain why the administration served up a ceasefire proposal crafted by Hamas's patrons, which outraged not only Israel but also Egypt. Protecting Hezbollah will further enable that group to make life hell for Israel's north (and perhaps not *only* Israel's north) when they next feel like it.

But strengthening Hezbollah will not only imperil Israel's security. It will also put Europe in greater danger and U.S. interests as well. It's a dim-witted policy, in other words, no matter what you think of Israel. And the general détente with Iran is, as the *Journal* points out, an insult to our Gulf allies as well as damaging to the fight against ISIS. The president's policies put our allies at the mercy of their enemies. That he's taunting them too only makes it clear that the policies are being instituted precisely how he envisioned them.

Contentions

[Arab World's Paradigm on Israel Has Shifted, but Obama's Hasn't](#)

by Evelyn Gordon

The inaugural session of the Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate took place last week, with scholars coming from around the world to participate in two days of discussion on a plethora of topics. Hisham Melhem, the Washington bureau chief for Al Arabiya News, subsequently published a lengthy summary of the proceedings on Al Arabiya's website, and reading it, I was struck by the absence of certain topics one might expect to feature prominently. Egypt, Iran, oil, ISIS, Turkey, Russia, the U.S., and Islamic extremism were all there. But in 1,700 words, the Palestinians weren't mentioned once, while Israel appeared only in the very last paragraph—which deserves to be read in full:

Finally, it was fascinating to attend a two day conference about the Middle East in times of upheaval in which Israel was mostly ignored, with the only frontal criticism of her policies delivered by an American diplomat.

And this explains a lot about the current U.S.-Israel spat. President Barack Obama entered office with the firm belief that the best way to improve America's relations with the Muslim world was to

create “daylight” between the U.S. and Israel, and for six years now, he and his staff have worked diligently to do exactly that. Nor was this an inherently unreasonable idea: Even a decade ago, Arab capitals might have cheered the sight of U.S. officials hurling [childish insults](#) at their Israeli counterparts.

The problem is that the Arab world has changed greatly in recent years, while the Obama administration—like most of Europe—remains stuck in its old paradigm. Granted, Arabs still don’t like Israel, but they have discovered that Israel and the Palestinians are very far down on their list of urgent concerns. The collapse of entire states that were formerly lynchpins of the Arab world, like Syria, Iraq, and Libya; the fear that other vital states like Egypt and Jordan could follow suit; the rise of Islamic extremist movements that threaten all the existing Arab states; the destabilizing flood of millions of refugees; the fear of U.S. disengagement from the region; the “predicament of living in the shadows of what they see as a belligerent Iran and an assertive Turkey” (to quote Melhem)—all these are far more pressing concerns.

And not only has Israel fallen off the list of pressing problems, but it has come to be viewed as capable of contributing, however modestly, to dealing with some of the new pressing problems. Last month, Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute published his impressions from a tour of the Mideast, including of Israel’s deepening strategic relationships with Egypt and Jordan. “Indeed, one of the most unusual moments of my trip was to hear certain Arab security officials effectively compete with one another for who has the better relationship with Israel,” he [wrote](#). “In this regard, times have certainly changed.”

In fact, in this new Middle East, a U.S.-Israel spat probably generates more worry than glee in Arab capitals. Once, it was an Arab article of faith that America cared little about Arabs but greatly about Israel. Thus to the degree that Arab and Israeli concerns overlapped, as they do now on issues ranging from Iran to ISIS, America could be trusted to deal with the threat. Now, the Obama administration still appears to care little for Arab concerns; it seems hell-bent on striking a grand bargain with Iran and withdrawing from the Mideast. But the Arab world’s former ace in the hole to prevent such developments—Israel’s influence in Washington—suddenly looks more like deuce.

Yet all these shifting winds seem to have blown right by the Obama administration: It still acts as if America’s position in the Muslim world depends on showing that it hates Israel, too. And thus you reach the farce of a two-day conference in Abu Dhabi where “the only frontal criticism” of Israel’s policies was “delivered by an American diplomat.”

When it comes to Israel, the Arab world has moved on. But the Obama administration remains stuck in the last century.

Fox News

[What a 'chickens**' knows about lame ducks](#)**

by Zev Chafets

After months of humiliating inaction in the Middle East, the Obama administration has finally launched a full scale attack.

It comes in response to an announcement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel is going ahead with plans to build about a thousand housing units in Jerusalem. In Jewish neighborhoods, yet!

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki denounced this as a “unilateral step” that would prejudice the outcome of talks on Jerusalem’s future. She called Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem illegal and a danger to the moribund American-sponsored peace process.

After the American misreading of the Arab spring, the infamous Obama red-line in Syria, U.S. abandonment of Iraq, the chaos in Libya and the American failure to understand, let alone contain, Islamic terrorism, this administration is not seen by Jerusalem as a font of wisdom.

Privately, the administration got really tough. A “senior White House official” [told Atlantic correspondent Jeffery Goldberg](#) that the Israeli prime minister is “a chickens***,” because he is afraid to make peace according to American specifications. “The only thing he’s interested in is protecting himself from political defeat.” The anonymous official said fearlessly. “[Netanyahu] is not Rabin. He’s not Sharon. He’s certainly no Begin. He’s got no guts.”

This American nostalgia for Menachem Begin made me laugh out loud. Having served as one of his press spokesmen for five years I vividly recall the campaign of personal vilification waged against him by the Carter administration.

We constantly heard reports of senior White House officials calling Begin a terrorist, a fascist, a war monger, a lunatic and a delusional religious fanatic. All off the record, of course.

On the record, Carter insisted that Israel had no right to settle in the West Bank or call Jerusalem its capital. He never tired of warning Israel that he was saying this for its own good. Not listening to the U.S. would be a form of Israeli national suicide.

Such dire warnings have been a feature of American diplomacy since Israel conquered the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1967.

Every American president since Nixon has pressed Israel to withdraw. Often they called this the key to Middle Eastern peace--a belief still held, against all evidence and common sense—by the present Secretary of State, John Kerry.

At home, Netanyahu’s critics on the left are portraying the current spat as an unprecedented crisis in American-Israeli relations. This is true if you set aside Truman’s arms boycott in 1948, Eisenhower’s mugging of Ben Gurion in 1956, the nasty Nixon-Golda Meir battles over the Rodgers “peace” plan, Gerald Ford’s 1975 threat to “reappraise” U.S.-Israeli relations, Carter’s blandishments or Bush 41’s attempt to pressure Prime Minister Shamir in acquiescence by denying U.S. loan guarantees for the absorption of Soviet immigrants. Disagreements over the implementation of the Oslo Accords led to skirmishing between Israel and the US under Clinton and Bush 43, as well as in the first six years of the Obama administration. Somehow, the relationship survived.

It will survive this one, too.

This week, Netanyahu returned fire by accusing Washington of being “detached from reality.”

Here, I think, is how Bibi sees that reality:

One: Jerusalem is Israel’s capital and no amount of pressure, even from the U.S., will change that. Israel may lop off some Arab neighborhoods as a concession to some future (increasingly improbable) demilitarized Palestinian state, but no Israeli government can relinquish the heart of the city.

Two: It should be obvious that after forty-seven years, Israel is not going to leave the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This is not simply because of stubbornness, fanaticism or politics. It would be a betrayal of national security. It would be crazy for a government facing the rolling tide of Islamic fundamentalism headed west out of Iran and Iraq to surrender real strategic depth for the chimera of “moral high ground.”

Three: Yes, this policy comes with a price. There could be a third Palestinian uprising. The U.N. might censure Israel.

“Progressive” Jews from abroad will be very upset by Israeli insensitivity. There might even be a commercial boycott of some sort. But these things, like the periodic dust-ups with Washington, have happened before and can be dealt with.

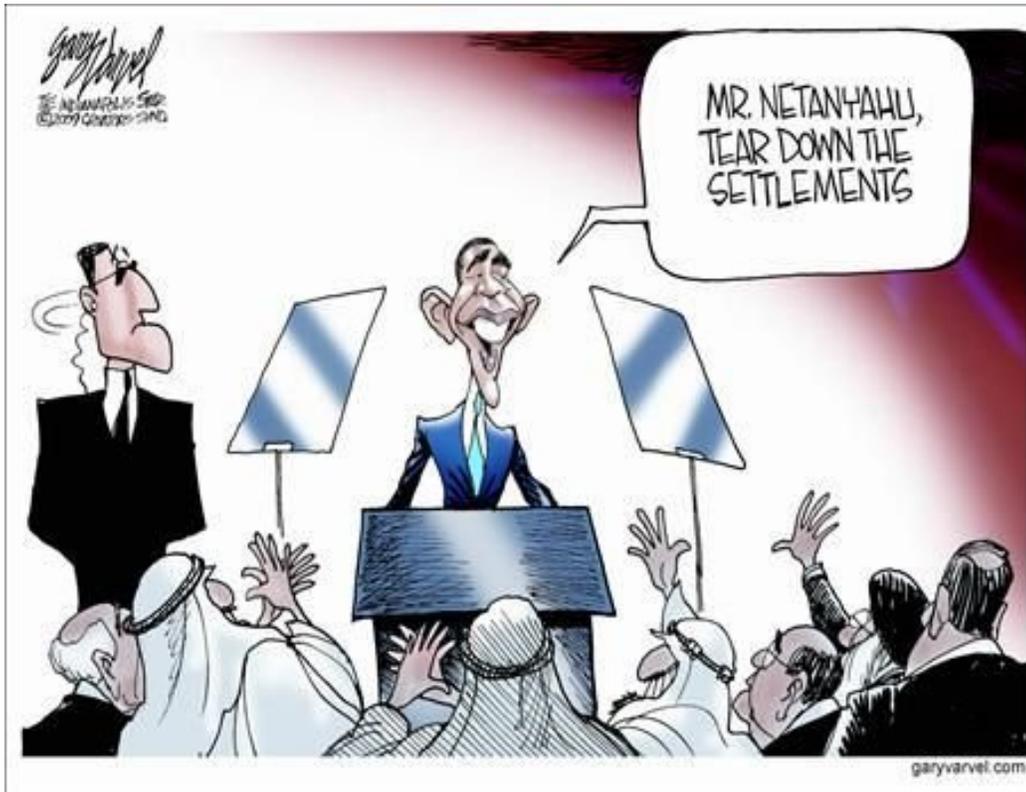
None of them have prevented Israel from going, in three generations, from an impoverished and embattled country of 650,000 to an astonishing democratic, economic and military success story with eight million citizens and growing. And the great majority of Israelis understand this.

Four: After the American misreading of the Arab spring, the infamous Obama red-line in Syria, U.S. abandonment of Iraq, the chaos in Libya and the American failure to understand, let alone contain, Islamic terrorism, this administration is not seen by Jerusalem as a font of wisdom. Nor is its sniping taken seriously.

Five: At the moment, Barack Obama and his anonymous senior officials may be madder than wet hens. But they are lame ducks who are likely to be lamer after next Tuesday’s election.

There is no reason to give in to U.S. pressure. After all, not even a chicken is scared of a lame duck.







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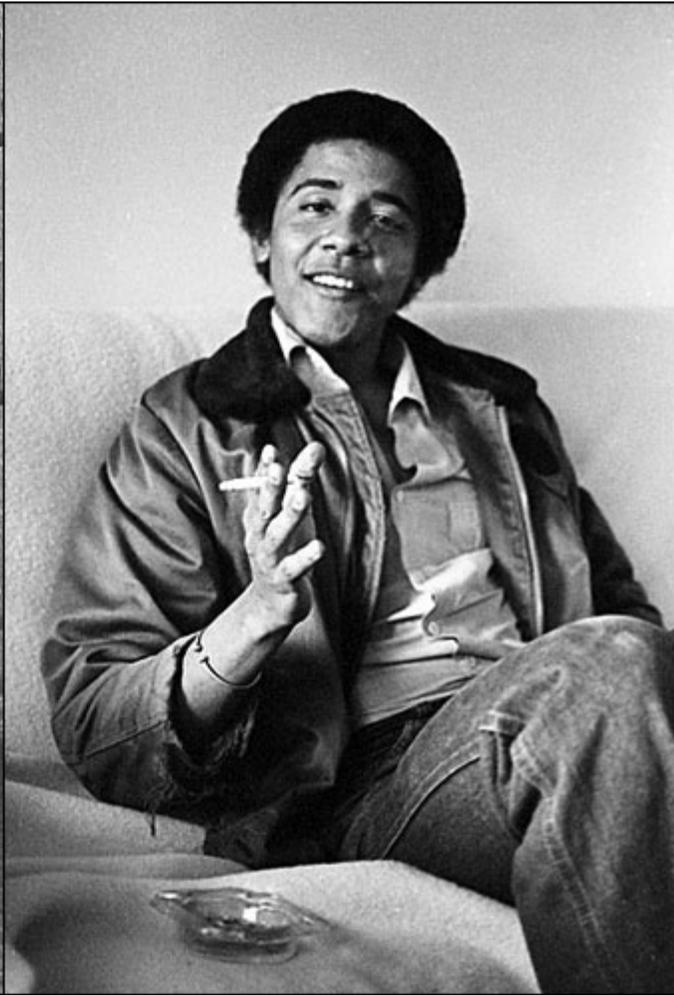
STOP!!!!

YOUR PRESIDENT IS AN IDIOT



LOOK!

You are NOT allowed to defend yourself
GET IT?????



I hate thinking!

Me too!



Let's Vote for Obama Again!

Suckers on Parade.blogspot.com