

February 5, 2015

Seth Mandel posts on Scott Walker's refusal to allow the Dem/Media coalition to set the terms of the debate.

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Walker doesn't agree. And he's been extraordinarily successful of late by not agreeing.

Part of the media's terrible coverage of national politics is the reliance on the personal: it matters to them who is saying it more than what is said. Romney got tagged as uncaring because he's rich. But the classic conservative policies don't reek of plutocracy when coming from the new crop of Republican stars, many of whom came from modest beginnings or are the children of immigrants, or both. Walker doesn't even have a college degree, which itself is incomprehensible to modern Democrats, who are elitist and credentialist and genuinely don't know what life is like in much of the country.

And neither does the media. Which is how someone like Walker could be so successful and still blindside the national press, who would struggle to find Wisconsin on a map. And it's why Walker is a threat to other high-profile Republicans who have accepted the Democratic/media framing of the issues in order to make a national pitch. Only one of them can be right.

Jonah Goldberg says Walker is the "vanilla candidate."

Vanilla is the most popular ice-cream flavor in America, not because it is the best (that would be coffee) but because it is the least objectionable. Put another way, vanilla is the most acceptable to the most people; it's not many people's favorite, but nobody hates it.

And that's why Wisconsin governor Scott Walker is the vanilla candidate.

A new Des Moines Register poll has Walker in first place — narrowly — among likely Republican caucus-goers. With Mitt Romney included in the poll, Walker was the respondents' first choice with 15 percentage points. Kentucky senator Rand Paul was second with 14 percentage points and Romney third with 13. With Romney out, Walker rose to 16 percentage points and Paul to 15. First place in a tightly packed field is better than any of the alternatives, but it's not that big a deal this far out.

The big deal is the vanilla factor (which sounds like a terribly boring spy novel). According to the Register story that accompanied the poll, 51 percent of caucus-goers want an "anti-establishment candidate without a lot of ties to Washington or Wall Street who would change the way things are done and challenge conventional thinking." Meanwhile, 43 percent prefer a more establishment figure "with executive experience who understands business and how to execute ideas."

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Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel provides background of Scott Walker's upbringing as a pastor's son.

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"Rev. Walker has in fact been a shepherd," reads a history of the church written in 1976 toward the end of his tenure. "...We try to say 'thank you' but words are inadequate."

Since then, the church building has changed little. With the hymn "Amazing Grace" rising from the organ on a recent Sunday, it was easy to imagine what the simple services would have been like in the Walkers' time here.

"'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved," the congregation sang.

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"First off, I want to thank God," Walker said in his November re-election speech. "I want to thank God for his abundant grace and mercy. Win or lose, it is more than sufficient for each and every one of us."

Today, Scott Walker's church, Meadowbrook in Wauwatosa, is large, evangelical and nondenominational.

The American Baptist faith of his youth is traditional but not sharply conservative, treating the Bible as the inspired word of God but also ordaining women and serving communion to other Christian visitors.

The son learned from his pastor father how to be at ease around people and keep them at ease around him. To parishioner Betty Balsley, Llew Walker and his family were as unpretentious and "common as an old shoe." ...

Turning our attention to Netanyahu's visit, **Jonathan Tobin** says it is the administration that has politicized the Iran debate.

... Up until Obama entered the White House, opposition to Iran and support for sanctions was a matter of bipartisan consensus. Though his rhetoric about stopping Iran has always been good, the president has opposed virtually every sanctions bill that has been proposed, including some that he now brags about having brought Iran to the table. An overwhelming majority of both Houses of Congress comprising members of both parties have supported increased sanctions on Iran for the past two years. The only consistent opponent has been the president. It is he who has sought to make sanctions a partisan issue by leaning on Democrats to oppose the measure out of loyalty to him. He has also stooped to exploit the resentment many Democrats feel toward Speaker Boehner as a reason to back his stand on Iran. Though Dermer may have erred by not consulting with the

White House about Boehner's invitation, the decision to turn this into a major kerfuffle is purely a product of administration politics, not an understandable desire on the part of the Israelis to aid those backing sanctions.

Let's also note the hypocrisy of many of his critics. The same people crying foul about Dermer and Netanyahu didn't protest when British Prime Minister David Cameron lobbied members of the Senate on behalf of Obama's stand on Iran. Some of those veteran American diplomats who are piling on are also guilty of having very short memories. One of the key witnesses against Dermer in the Times article is former State Department official Daniel Kurtzer who said it was unheard of for a diplomat to go behind the back of a country's government and work with its domestic opponents. But Kurtzer and the rest of the peace processers who worked for a number of administrations over the last 25 years have been guilty of doing just that whenever a Likud prime minister was in power. Both Presidents Clinton and Obama have worked tirelessly to undermine and defeat Netanyahu throughout his three terms in office in ways that Dermer and his boss would never dream of trying to do to Obama.

Say what you will about the mess that Dermer and Netanyahu find themselves in and for which they bear some responsibility. But the prime minister's scheduled speech has become a diplomatic cause célèbre due to the partisan political games being played by the White House, not the Israelis. It is Obama that is undermining the U.S.-Israel alliance by seeking to appease Iran, not the efforts of Dermer to rally Americans behind a stand that is in the best interests of both countries.

Peter Wehner calls him the anti-Israel president.

I wanted to add to Jonathan's post on President Obama and Israel, but perhaps sharpen some points just a bit.

The Obama administration is unusually petty and sophomoric. The attacks leveled against Israel's ambassador to the United States, Ron Dermer, are part of a troubling pattern in which officials in the Israeli government—including and especially Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—are vilified.

*No world leader has been treated by President Obama and his administration with the contempt they have shown Prime Minister Netanyahu—from this snub in 2010 to being called a "coward" and "chickens*** prime minister" by senior administration officials.*

But the problem goes much deeper than a personality clash. President Obama is, quite simply, anti-Israel. In every conceivable situation and circumstance, the president and his aides give the benefit of the doubt not to Israel but to its enemies. This despite the fact that Israel is among America's longest and best allies, democratic, lawful, takes exquisite steps to prevent civilian deaths in nations committed to destroying it, and has made extraordinary sacrifices for peace. No matter; the pressure that's applied is always applied most against Israel—even when, as in last year's conflict with Hamas, Israel was the victim of lethal attacks.

This is morally shameful. In a world filled with despotic leaders and sadistic and ruthless regimes—North Korea, Iran, Syria, Cuba, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, and on and on—which nation alone does Mr. Obama become "enraged" at? Which is the object of his disdain? Which provokes his white-hot anger?

Answer: Israel. Has it struck you, as it has struck me, that with every other nation, including the most repressive and anti-American on earth, Mr. Obama is careful never to give offense, to always extend the olive branch, and to treat their leaders with unusual deference and respect? Except for the Jewish State of Israel. It always seems to be in the Obama crosshair. ...

It's not just the GOP. Grown-up Dems are busy rebuking the administration's foreign follies. Jackson Diehl of WaPo has the story. Mr Diehl is Deputy Editorial Page Editor of the Post

For more than two years, a breach has been opening between President Obama and the foreign policy establishment of the Democratic Party. Last week, as Russia pressed a new offensive in Ukraine and the Senate debated sanctions on Iran, it cracked open a little wider.

First came the introduction in the Senate, and lopsided passage by the Banking Committee, of a bill that would place new sanctions on Iran if no agreement limits its nuclear program by June. Though fiercely opposed by Obama, the measure, co-sponsored by Sen. Robert Menendez (N.J.), the senior Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, had won the express support of 13 other Democratic senators by the end of the week. A letter signed by Menendez plus nine of them pledged to delay a final floor vote until March 24, the deadline set by the administration for finalizing the framework of a bargain.

While that postponement avoided an immediate confrontation with Obama, the larger message of the senators was clear: They are "deeply skeptical," said the letter, that Obama will obtain adequate concessions from Tehran — despite what has been an increasingly single-minded diplomatic push.

At week's end came another de facto vote of no confidence: a report by eight foreign policy luminaries, due to be formally released Monday, saying the president should "immediately change" his policy of refusing to supply Ukraine with weapons to defend its besieged eastern provinces. "Washington," it said bluntly, has "not devoted sufficient attention to the threat posed by Russia and its implications for Western security. This must change."

This rebuke was signed by Michèle Flournoy, the deputy defense secretary in Obama's first term; Ivo Daalder, his first-term NATO ambassador; and Strobe Talbott, a former deputy secretary of state who is president of the deep-blue Brookings Institution. ...

Andrew Malcolm ends our week with late night humor.

SNL: President Obama has threatened that Israeli Prime Ministers Netanyahu will pay 'a price' for agreeing to speak to a joint session of Congress on Iran next month. Which brings the number of countries threatening Israel up to an even all of them.

Fallon: A new helicopter service called Gotham Air now offers cheap trips from Manhattan to JFK or Newark airports for just \$99. 'Cause if there's two words I trust together in the same sentence, it's "cheap" and "helicopter."

Conan: Last week Chris Christie and Mitt Romney met for dinner. Afterwards, Romney said, "It's the first time I couldn't afford to pick up the check." ...

Contentions

Scott Walker Rejects Your Premise

by Seth Mandel

The conventional wisdom after Republicans lost two presidential elections to Barack Obama was that the GOP needed to concede the premise of certain Democratic talking points. Suddenly immigration reform became urgent enough for a prospective GOP candidate to lead the effort in the Senate. And even more suddenly, talk of inequality has emerged in conservative circles. But what if the conventional wisdom is wrong? What if, instead, Scott Walker is right?

The Wisconsin governor is enjoying a bit of a boomlet right now, as Peter Beinart notes in a sharp [piece](#) on Walker's unapologetic conservatism. And he's earned it. He won three statewide elections in four years, and did so with national media attention and the concerted lunatic tactics of public unions (death threats, violence, compulsive Hitler comparisons) aimed at him and his supporters. He won comfortably and with a smile on his face. Walker never lost his composure and never stooped to the level of his fanatical liberal opponents.

None of this is news. What's changed is that Walker has, in the last week, gone national. His speech at the Iowa Freedom Summit earned rave reviews, and was followed with what appears to be the first pro-Walker [presidential ad](#). And everyone seems to have noticed what Walker's opponents in Wisconsin have learned the hard way, repeatedly: he's a formidable politician. This should worry his GOP rivals not only because of Walker's win streak, but also because Walker is doing something many of them aren't: he's setting the terms of the debate instead of following the terms the Democrats have set.

A good example of how this plays out concerns Mitt Romney, who had been flirting with another presidential run. Romney was hurt by his infamous "47 percent" remark in which he appeared to write off voters he considered contentedly dependent on government. It became a catchphrase for the Republicans' so-called empathy gap.

Before deciding to pass on running again, Romney had been trying to undo the lingering damage of the Monopoly Man reputation by expressing his concern for the poor. He was rewarded for stepping into this rhetorical bear trap with a giddy President Obama in full class warrior mode, as Politico [notes](#):

"Even though their policies haven't quite caught up yet, their rhetoric is starting to sound pretty Democratic," Obama said of the Republicans during a House Democratic retreat. "We have a former presidential candidate on the other side and [who is] suddenly deeply concerned about poverty. That's great, let's go. Let's do something about it."

Even when trash talking, the president is not exactly a wordsmith. But the point, clumsy and juvenile though it is, shines through: whatever your policies, to simply *care* about poor people makes you sound "pretty Democratic," as the intellectually cloistered president sees it.

This helps Democrats because even if Republicans come around to demonstrating the empathy they supposedly lack, it sends the message that the Democrats were right. Walker rejects the premise.

Beinart explains how the media missed this story until now:

Walker's rise illustrates the pitfalls of media coverage of the GOP race. Not many national reporters live within the conservative media ecosystem. They therefore largely assume that in order to win over the non-white, female, millennial and working class voters who rejected John McCain and Mitt Romney, Republican presidential candidates must break from conservative orthodoxy, if not substantively, then at least rhetorically. Journalists are also drawn to storylines about change. Thus, when potential GOP candidates show signs of ideological deviation, the press perks up. After 2012, Marco Rubio garnered enormous media attention for his efforts at immigration reform. Rand Paul's transgressions—whether on foreign policy, civil liberties or race—make headlines almost every week. In covering the launch of his new Super PAC, journalists made much of Jeb Bush's discussion of income inequality and his fluent Spanish. Most recently, reporters have lavished attention on Mitt Romney's new focus on the poor.

The lesson, as I interpret it, is that the press and the Democrats speak the same language. That's not surprising; the mainstream press, especially during national elections, functions as a messaging office for the Democrats. Because of this, they just assume that in order to be a serious presidential candidate you have to be like them, like the Democrats.

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National Review

[The Vanilla Candidate](#)

Unlike the rest of the current field, Scott Walker can boast support from both wings of the GOP.

by Jonah Goldberg

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Respondents looking for an establishment candidate said Romney was their first choice. Those preferring an outsider said Paul was their first choice. But both groups said their second choice was a big scoop of Walker.

Of course, this can all change. No matter how palatable it is, people can still grow weary of vanilla, and Walker may melt under the pressure. Though having won three statewide elections in four years — in liberal Wisconsin! — that's unlikely.

If you're Jeb Bush, Paul, Ted Cruz, or one of the other candidates — official and unofficial — Walker should have you worried. With the arguable exceptions of Senator Marco Rubio and Governor Bobby Jindal, right now most of the field is made up of boutique flavors, intensely popular among some, intensely unpopular among others.

Pundits talk of the “establishment versus tea party” rift in the GOP as a recent development. The truth is this schism is more like a permanent feature of Republican politics.

Robert Taft, Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan, and Newt Gingrich fought the forces of Thomas Dewey, Nelson Rockefeller, Bob Dole, and George H.W. Bush with hammers and tongs for decades, losing many early battles and winning later ones. Richard Nixon brilliantly played both sides against the other, alternating between establishmentarian noblesse oblige and populist hostility to the “Georgetown set” whenever it served his purposes.

These squabbles often took an ideological color, but they were sometimes simply bare-knuckle fights over who got control of the levers of power within the party. For example, even today, the ideological differences between the anti-establishment Cruz and that supposedly wan vassal of entrenched power, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, are quite small.

Bush is doing a phenomenal job of securing support from big GOP donors. As a result, the Beltway news corps has dubbed him the front-runner. “Republicans have a tradition of picking an anointed one early,” Karen Tumulty and Matea Gold of the *Washington Post* write. “That establishment candidate almost always ends up with the nomination, although not without a fight and some speed bumps along the way.”

Yes and no. The anointed one and the establishment candidate are not necessarily the same person. And what counts as “the establishment” is often a moving target.

Just consider the Bushes. George H.W. Bush ran as the establishment candidate and lost to the anointed candidate in 1980. George W. Bush thought he was anointed in 2000 but ended up having to run as an anti-establishment candidate (recasting himself as a “reformer with results”). Ultimately, both got elected, but only after finding peak vanilla. Jeb Bush is a long way from that.

Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

Scott Walker learned early lessons at father's Iowa church

Youth who started 'Jesus USA Club' later turned to politics

by Jason Stein

Plainfield, Iowa — Before Scott Walker stood on a national stage, he crawled beneath the wooden pews and white steeple of First Baptist Church.

His father preached and his mother ran the Sunday school in this Iowa farm town too small to have a stoplight. Growing up in the parsonage next door — in the shadow of the church — Walker learned his first lessons in faith, politics and living a life on public display.

His religious upbringing set a course for the governor's later life and may boost his presidential bid among evangelicals in this early caucus state. Just as he did in Des Moines a week ago, Walker will be able to talk directly to “values voters” in Iowa, a state where caucusgoers have long leaned toward religious candidates such as Rick Santorum, Mike Huckabee and Jimmy Carter.

Walker is already welcome in this northeast Iowa town, where four decades later some residents hold warm memories of a toddler splayed out on the church floor.

“It was cute to us,” remembered Janice Dietz, acknowledging that the young preacher in the pulpit, the Rev. Llew Walker, might not have appreciated the humor as much as his tiny congregation. “You could hear the snickers in the church.”

When Scott was 2½, the Walkers arrived in Plainfield in the summer of 1970, moving from Colorado Springs, Colo., a city of more than 100,000 and a church where Llew served as an assistant pastor. In this community of 430 residents, Llew would head his own congregation and serve on the municipal council and his wife, Pat, would give birth to a second son, David.

A visitor can learn a lot about Walker's seven years here by stopping at its central intersection, where the church still stands across from what in better times were a tavern, a pharmacy and a grocery store.

“You get the wrong number and you still talk for five minutes,” said JoAnn Ihde, a former neighbor to the Walkers who keeps a picture of the Wisconsin governor and first lady on her refrigerator. “You know everybody in town.”



Scott Walker with younger brother David and parents Rev. Llew and Pat Walker.

A 'shepherd' in their midst

To understand Walker's time in Plainfield, stroll down the main strip, starting at the church. It is one of just two in Plainfield — the other is Methodist.

With its stained glass and ornamented tin wainscoting, the First Baptist building evokes the days when its frontier faithful were baptized in the nearby Cedar River. Some of its families trace their histories back to the church's founding in 1869.

Llew Walker had only some 90 people in weekly worship, but he made ambitious plans for his flock, enlarging the building with a renovation and installing the first indoor baptismal tank.

"Rev. Walker has in fact been a shepherd," reads a history of the church written in 1976 toward the end of his tenure. "...We try to say 'thank you' but words are inadequate."

Since then, the church building has changed little. With the hymn "Amazing Grace" rising from the organ on a recent Sunday, it was easy to imagine what the simple services would have been like in the Walkers' time here.

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The son learned from his pastor father how to be at ease around people and keep them at ease around him. To parishioner Betty Balsley, Llew Walker and his family were as unpretentious and "common as an old shoe."

"He made you feel welcome," fellow parishioner Joan Marlette said. "Some people are just better with people than others."

The young minister could still get what he wanted out of his members. When Merlin "Charlie" Dietz, a dairy farmer, said he couldn't leave his barn for a weekly men's prayer meeting, Llew Walker had an answer.

"He said, 'We'll come to you because you can't come to us,'" said Charlie's wife, Janice Dietz.

So every Friday morning, the circle of Llew Walker, Charlie Dietz and Betty Balsley's husband, Larry, met in Dietz's milk room, offering up prayers for the sick and those in need.

The minister's wife

Step outside the church, and the two-story, three-bedroom parsonage next door is painted a matching white and has a phone line that rings in both buildings at once.

In the kitchen of this house, Pat Walker ministered to her husband's congregation by frequently entertaining guests and cooking for those around her.

Outside the home, Pat Walker also oversaw the Sunday school and made hospital visits with her husband. When neighbors or parishioners baby-sat for Scott or David, their parents were most likely both at work for the church rather than off on an outing as a couple.

"Mrs. Walker was really stretched out over there. They had her doing a lot of things," said her neighbor JoAnn Ihde, whose daughter baby-sat for Scott and David.

Remembering the pair today, First Baptist members are as likely to mention Pat Walker's efforts as those of her husband.

"If she had a penny for every chocolate chip cookie she baked, she'd be a rich woman," said Betty Balsley, referring to a treat Pat Walker later would make for her son's campaign workers.

"She was almost as much of a minister as he was," her husband Larry remembered.

Everyone knew him

The church and parsonage were both a geographic and a social hub in the community.

Living on the main street as the child of a pastor was like growing up in a "fishbowl," as Scott Walker himself would later put it, and it taught the boy to be aware of how others saw him. It was an apt preparation for the future politician who would later relish radio and television interviews and tweeting about meals and other ephemera of his personal life.

"It would be difficult for him or his brother to go anywhere without people knowing him," said the Rev. Shawn Geer, the current pastor at First Baptist.

But if the pastor's sons were closely watched, they could also be indulged by a rural community that cherishes children and loved the preacher and his wife. Joan Marlette's father made the Walker boys a toy wooden barn the size of a doll house, and Pat Walker kept it for decades, mailing it back to Marlette a few years ago.

"I was so pleased she sent that," Marlette said of Pat Walker. "She thought of us instead of just giving it to somebody."

Larry Balsley recalled the reaction of one parishioner who picked up David Walker in a luxury sedan only to have the boy track mud on the seats.

"He said, 'What do you do? It's the preacher's son,'" Larry Balsley said.

None of the children or adults who knew Scott Walker then, including playmates and baby sitters, remembered him as a troublemaker.

Walker is often seen today as a mediocre student who never finished his degree at Marquette University. But Betty Balsley, who served as Walker's third-grade teacher, said he was an "excellent student" in the brick public school that served Plainfield students of every grade.

Balsley said Walker scored well enough on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills that she went down the street from the school to First Baptist to tell his parents about his results.

"He was a mischievous little boy, but he wasn't naughty," she said. ... **This got a little long. Follow the link if you want to see what we cut out.**

Contentions

Obama Politicized Iran Sanctions; Not Israel's Ambassador

by Jonathan S. Tobin

Ron Dermer came to Washington in 2013 with a target on his back. Israel's ambassador to the United States was a close associate of Prime Minister Netanyahu and lambasted as not only the "brain" of a leader widely disliked by liberal Jews but also tainted because of his former close ties with American conservatives. So it is not exactly a surprise that much of the criticism that has been focused on Netanyahu's acceptance of an invitation to address a joint session of Congress on the issue of Iran sanctions is being directed at Dermer. But even if you think, as I do, that the decision to give the speech at this time is a mistake, it's important to recognize that much of the opprobrium being hurled at the ambassador is deeply unfair. While Dermer is being accused of undiplomatic interference in U.S. politics and flouting protocol, it is the White House that has politicized an issue that would otherwise be a matter of bipartisan consensus, not the Israeli Embassy or even House Speaker John Boehner.

Even Dermer's predecessor Michael Oren—whose background was as a historian, not a political adviser like Dermer, and was therefore a less polarizing figure—learned that being the ambassador from a Netanyahu-led government was no easy task in Obama's Washington. But Dermer was doubly handicapped because of his close ties with the prime minister. That's ironic because being his confidant made him an ideal person to serve as an envoy to his country's sole superpower ally.

Dermer is resented by the left-leaning figures that dominate Israel's foreign ministry as well as by most of the members of Israel's press corps in Washington, who lean left just like most of their American colleagues. If that didn't place him behind the 8-ball, Dermer also had been involved in [a memorable spat with the editors of the *New York Times*](#) in 2011 when he publicly turned down their offer—on behalf of Netanyahu—of space on their op-ed pages because he rightly said the avalanche of anti-Israel pieces they publish made such a piece mere tokenism designed to cover up their bias.

So Dermer can hardly be surprised that the *Times* devoted [a piece in today's paper](#) to piling on the ambassador.

Let's acknowledge, as I have written a few times over the past week, that accepting Boehner's invitation to address Congress on the issue of Iran sanctions was a blunder. Such a flamboyant intervention by an Israeli leader into a congressional debate in which the White House was on the other side was asking for trouble. It diverted attention from the president's indefensible opposition to strengthening his hand in negotiations with Iran by making it clear that the Islamist regime would pay a high price for further delay and refusal to give up their nuclear ambitions. It allowed the administration to change the subject from its pursuit of détente with Iran to Netanyahu and undermined efforts to rally Democratic support for sanctions.

But even if we accept that Dermer and Netanyahu were wrong, it wasn't the Israelis who politicized the sanctions debate. That was the fault of the White House.

Up until Obama entered the White House, opposition to Iran and support for sanctions was a matter of bipartisan consensus. Though his rhetoric about stopping Iran has always been good, the president has opposed virtually every sanctions bill that has been proposed, including some that he now brags about having brought Iran to the table. An overwhelming majority of both Houses of Congress comprising members of both parties have supported increased sanctions on Iran for the past two years. The only consistent opponent has been the president. It is he who has sought to make sanctions a partisan issue by leaning on Democrats to oppose the measure out of loyalty to him. He has also stooped to exploit the resentment many Democrats feel toward Speaker Boehner as a reason to back his stand on Iran. Though Dermer may have erred by not consulting with the White House about Boehner's invitation, the decision to turn this into a major kerfuffle is purely a product of administration politics, not an understandable desire on the part of the Israelis to aid those backing sanctions.

Let's also note the hypocrisy of many of his critics. The same people crying foul about Dermer and Netanyahu didn't protest when British Prime Minister David Cameron lobbied members of the Senate on behalf of Obama's stand on Iran. Some of those veteran American diplomats who are piling on are also guilty of having very short memories. One of the key witnesses against Dermer in the *Times* article is former State Department official Daniel Kurtzer who said it was unheard of for a diplomat to go behind the back of a country's government and work with its domestic opponents. But Kurtzer and the rest of the peace processors who worked for a number of administrations over the last 25 years have been guilty of doing just that whenever a Likud prime minister was in power. Both Presidents Clinton and Obama have worked tirelessly to undermine and defeat Netanyahu

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America's Anti-Israeli President

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No world leader has been treated by President Obama and his administration with the contempt they have shown Prime Minister Netanyahu—from [this snub](#) in 2010 to being [called](#) a “coward” and “chickens*** prime minister” by senior administration officials.

But the problem goes much deeper than a personality clash. President Obama is, quite simply, anti-Israel. In every conceivable situation and circumstance, the president and his aides give the benefit of the doubt not to Israel but to its enemies. This despite the fact that Israel is among America's longest and best allies, democratic, lawful, takes exquisite steps to prevent civilian deaths in nations committed to destroying it, and has made extraordinary sacrifices for peace. No matter; the pressure that's applied is always applied most against Israel—even when, as in last year's conflict with Hamas, Israel was the victim of lethal attacks.

This is morally shameful. In a world filled with despotic leaders and sadistic and ruthless regimes—North Korea, Iran, Syria, Cuba, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, and on and on—which nation alone does Mr. Obama become “[enraged](#)” at? Which is the object of his disdain? Which provokes his white-hot anger?

Answer: Israel. Has it struck you, as it has struck me, that with every other nation, including the most repressive and anti-American on earth, Mr. Obama is careful never to give offense, to always extend the olive branch, and to treat their leaders with unusual deference and respect? Except for the Jewish State of Israel. It always seems to be in the Obama crosshair.

Because this attitude is so detached from objective circumstances and the actions of Israel and the actions of the adversaries of Israel, something else—and something rather disquieting—is going on here. Mr. Obama wouldn't be the first world leader to have an irrational animus against Israel. He's not even the first American president to have an irrational animus against Israel. (See: Jimmy Carter.) But it is fair to say, I think, that no American president has been this consistently hostile to Israel while in office or shown such palpable anger and scorn for it and for Israel's leader.

Perhaps given President Obama's history—including his intimate, 20-year relationship with the anti-Semitic minister Jeremiah Wright—this shouldn't come as a surprise. But that doesn't make it any less disturbing.

Washington Post

[Obama's fight with his own party over foreign policy](#)

by Jackson Diehl

For more than two years, a breach has been opening between President Obama and the foreign policy establishment of the Democratic Party. Last week, as [Russia pressed a new offensive in Ukraine](#) and the Senate debated sanctions on Iran, it cracked open a little wider.

First came the introduction in the Senate, and [lopsided passage by the Banking Committee](#), of a bill that would place new sanctions on Iran if no agreement limits its nuclear program by June. Though fiercely opposed by Obama, the measure, co-sponsored by Sen. Robert Menendez (N.J.), the senior Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, had won the express support of 13 other Democratic senators by the end of the week. [A letter](#) signed by Menendez plus nine of them pledged to delay a final floor vote until March 24, the deadline set by the administration for finalizing the framework of a bargain.

While that postponement avoided an immediate confrontation with Obama, the larger message of the senators was clear: They are ["deeply skeptical,"](#) said the letter, that Obama will obtain adequate concessions from Tehran — despite what has been an increasingly single-minded diplomatic push.

At week's end came another de facto vote of no confidence: [a report](#) by eight foreign policy luminaries, due to be formally released Monday, saying the president should "immediately change" his policy of refusing to supply Ukraine with weapons to defend its besieged eastern provinces. "Washington," it said bluntly, has "not devoted sufficient attention to the threat posed by Russia and its implications for Western security. This must change."

This rebuke was signed by [Michèle Flournoy](#), the deputy defense secretary in Obama's first term; [Ivo Daalder](#), his first-term NATO ambassador; and [Strobe Talbott](#), a former deputy secretary of state who is president of the deep-blue Brookings Institution. It expanded on legislation calling for arms sales to Ukraine that passed Congress last month with sponsors that included [Menendez and seven other Senate Democrats](#), including Carl Levin (Mich.), the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, and Richard Durbin (Ill.), the second-ranking Senate Democrat.

The Democratic rebellion against Obama's policies began with Syria and Obama's refusal to provide support to rebels battling the regime of Bashar al-Assad. [Obama's rejection in 2012 of a proposal](#) by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and then-CIA Director David Petraeus to train and arm the rebels alienated a wide swath of the Democratic foreign policy mainstream — including Levin, who has [campaigning for creating a no-fly zone in northern Syria](#), and Rep. Adam Smith (Wash.), the ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee. Smith [called for a formal Pentagon training program](#) for Syrian rebels a year before Obama finally agreed to it.

The dissension now encompasses Ukraine, where Obama is seen as having been too slow and limited in his response to Russia's gross violation of international treaties guaranteeing European borders, and, even more so, Iran — where a growing number of Democrats worry that Obama is

offering too-generous terms while [failing to challenge Iran's conventional aggression](#) in the Middle East, at the expense of Israel and traditional U.S. Arab allies.

The rift is not particularly ideological; this is not a case of Clinton and center-right allies facing off against Obama and the party's more liberal wing, as during the 2008 presidential primaries. Levin was a staunch opponent of the Iraq war, as was Daalder. Smith has been a strong Obama supporter. One of the co-sponsors of the arms-for-Ukraine legislation was Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), one of the most liberal members of the caucus.

Rather, it has more to do with Obama's extreme caution in responding to international challenges, as in Syria and Ukraine; and his radical faith that longstanding U.S. adversaries can be converted into strategic partners. Obama's reaction to the Iraq war, which has been to avoid even indirect U.S. military engagement in all other international conflicts, has had the effect of creating common cause between anti-Iraq doves like Levin and Daalder and relative hawks such as Clinton.

Similarly, Obama's belief that Iran, if granted its nuclear infrastructure and what it regards as its rightful place in the Middle East, will play a constructive role in ending the wars in Syria and Iraq looks scary not just to senators like Menendez but also to longtime Obama allies like [Virginia's Tim Kaine](#), who said in a recent Senate hearing that he had "a series of very significant concerns" about the emerging deal with Tehran.

So far, there's little sign that the Democratic criticism has had much effect on Obama. He's still balking at significant intervention in Syria, still refusing even defensive weapons for Ukraine, still intently focused on cutting a deal with Iran. If and when that comes, the showdown with his own party may begin.

IBD

[Late Night Humor](#)

by Andrew Malcolm

Conan: A man was arrested trying to enter the White House. Luckily, the man was intercepted after taking advice from Seahawks Coach Pete Carroll.

Conan: Americans consumed 1.2 billion chicken wings on Super Bowl Sunday. And then after breakfast, they tuned into the Super Bowl.

Conan: Through Valentine's Day, McDonalds will accept some payment in hugs. It's great news for anyone who hasn't heard about the measles outbreak.

Conan: By the way, you know who doesn't take hugs as payment? Hooters. I found that out the hard way.

Conan: Google plans satellites to beam free Internet access around world. It's doing that in association with the global charity, "Porn Without Borders."

Conan: Last week Chris Christie and Mitt Romney met for dinner. Afterwards, Romney said, "It's the first time I couldn't afford to pick up the check."

Meyers: CNN is reportedly developing a game show to be hosted by Anderson Cooper. It will be just like the other CNN shows, except the contestants will make the wild guesses, instead of the news anchors.

Conan: The other day a Delta flight from Cleveland to New York took off with just two passengers. And get this—they lost their luggage.

Conan: Attorney General Nominee Loretta Lynch told a Senate committee waterboarding is “torture.” Then she said, “But it’s still not as bad as the new Johnny Depp movie.”

Conan: After a string of movie flops, Johnny Depp wants new management. Apparently, he’s firing his agent, Nicolas Cage.

Conan: Apple has accumulated so much money in profits it could afford to give each American \$556. Apple responded, “Or we could release a slightly different iPhone, and everyone could give us \$556.”

Meyers: A baby was born on a flight to New York's Kennedy Airport. The baby then celebrated her first and second birthdays waiting at baggage claim.

Conan: Security experts say the most common password last year was 123456. Which is why an hour ago, I changed all my passwords to 123456...7

Fallon: It just came out that Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx was designated as the one cabinet member absent from Obama's State of the Union last month in case there was a disaster at the Capitol. Also, Time Warner was supposed to come fix the White House cable between the hours of 8 and 11.

Conan: A new study says kids have bad health effects eating too much pizza. The study used a pie chart, which children immediately tried to eat.

Fallon: A new helicopter service called Gotham Air now offers cheap trips from Manhattan to JFK or Newark airports for just \$99. 'Cause if there's two words I trust together in the same sentence, it's “cheap” and “helicopter.”

SNL: In September, Pope Francis will celebrate mass in New York’s Madison Square Garden. Because the Pope always tries to go where people are suffering the most.

Conan: Doctors say your attention span is like a muscle that can be strengthened. I didn’t read the rest of the article. I saw a shiny thing.

Conan: President Obama met the new king of Saudi Arabia last week. He also met Saudi Arabia’s First Lady, the Second Lady, the Third Lady and the Fourth Lady

Conan: California is trying to contain a measles outbreak that started at Disneyland in December. Luckily, everyone exposed to it is still in line at Space Mountain.

SNL: President Obama has threatened that Israeli Prime Ministers Netanyahu will pay ‘a price’ for agreeing to speak to a joint session of Congress on Iran next month. Which brings the number of countries threatening Israel up to an even *all of them*.

SNL: King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia died recently at the age of 90. He was run over by a terrible woman driver.

Conan: The Northeast was hit with a major snowstorm. People had not seen a white-out like that since the Oscar nominations.

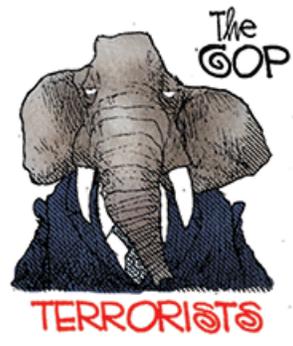
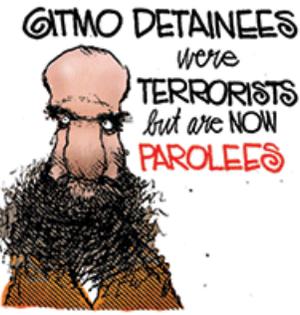
Conan: Italy has released a video that's aimed at ending offensive Italian stereotypes. I'm not sure the video is going to work, because it's hosted by the Super Mario Brothers.

Conan: Today, the Apple iPad turns five years old. So it's official, the iPad is as old as the people who make it.

Conan: You heard Boston beat Seattle in the Super Bowl. I'm from Boston and my wife is from Seattle. So my question tonight is, Does anyone have a couch I can crash on?



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MR. PRESIDENT...LET'S
TAKE OUT ISIS NOW
AND QUIT PUSSY-
FOOTING AROUND!



UH... I
CAN'T
HEAR
YOU.



IF WE WERE AWARE OF
THE **EVIL** BACK THEN,
WOULD THE WORLD HAVE
PREVENTED IT?