

March 30, 2015

Streetwise Professor has the idea that the president is a cross between Nero and Captain Ahab.

The world spins into chaos, and Obama is so detached and indifferent, fiddling while it all burns. But maybe the comparison with Nero is unfair. To Nero. After all, Nero allegedly had a purpose in mind when burning Rome: it allowed him to bypass the Senate and rebuild Rome to his grandiose plans. (Bypassing the Senate . . . maybe there are more parallels than I thought!) Obama just appears to not want to be bothered. Or perhaps he is like Major Major Major Major, promoted well above his competence and knowing it, and retreating to the confines of his office and quarters in order to avoid confronting things he is incapable of solving.

Exhibit 1. Yemen is exploding, with Iranian-backed Houthis seizing power and the desperate Saudis striking back with air strikes. This obviously raises the possibility of conflict between the Saudis (and the rest of the GCC) and Iran. But the administration still defends the "Yemen model" as a success. No. Really. Spokesman "Josh Earnest" (that has to be a made up name, right?) says the concept of relying on foreign governments to fight terrorism is right, even though the government we relied on in this case has utterly collapsed.

Exhibit 2. Even though the tension between Russia and Nato is at Cold War levels; even though Russia is making nuclear threats against Nato members; even though the easternmost nations in Nato are increasingly anxious that Putin has them in his sights; even though there are doubts about the credibility of Section V of the Nato treaty; and even though Nato is struggling to find a way to respond to hybrid war, Obama is refusing to find time in his busy schedule to see the new head of Nato, Jens Stoltenberg. ...

Jonah Goldberg is calling him Dr. Ignoro.

... While the White House claims that it cannot pretend Netanyahu didn't make those remarks, it has no problem playing make-believe with comments from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (currently serving out the 10th year of his four-year term), who has repeatedly said the Palestinians will never recognize Israel as a Jewish state. Abbas, who literally has a Ph.D. in Holocaust denial, is what counts as a Palestinian moderate. Nonetheless, he formed a unity government with Hamas, the terrorist group openly determined to slaughter the Israelis.

But such facts are no match for Obama's limitless powers to pretend away annoying details. Why, just last week, Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, responded to chants of "Death to America" by saying, "Of course, yes, death to America." The White House is pretending he didn't make such comments. And when the administration gets a deal with the Iranians on their nuclear program, the president will take it to the U.N., not the Senate, because ignoring Congress -- and the Constitution -- is simply what he does on days that end with "y."

Barely six months ago, Obama cited Yemen as a great example of how successful his counterterrorism approach is. This week, as Yemen spiraled toward civil war and American military forces fled, Obama went golfing, ignoring the whole mess. (For Dr. Ignoro, the golf course is like his Batcave or Fortress of Solitude).

When his own advisers, military and civilian, warned Obama that fully bugging out of Iraq would be calamitous, leaving a vacuum for terrorists and Iranian meddling, the president ignored the advice and pretended everything was fine.

When a reporter for The New Yorker asked him about the Islamic State gobbling up Iraq, Obama explained why they should be ignored: They're just a "jayvee team," he said. ...

Paul Mirengoff gets the back story of the faux outrage at Netanyahu from David Bernstein of Volokh Conspiracy.

... On March 6, less than two weeks before the election, a major Israeli newspaper published a document showing that Netanyahu's envoy had agreed on his behalf to an American-proposed framework that offered substantial Israeli concessions that Netanyahu publicly opposed. Let's put on our thinking caps. Where would this leak have come from? The most logical suspect is the American State Department.

So here's the dynamic: Netanyahu, while talking tough publicly about terms for an Israeli-Palestinian deal, was much more accommodating privately during actual negotiations. Just before Israeli elections, the U.S. government likely leaks evidence of his flexibility to harm Netanyahu. As a result, Netanyahu starts to lose right-wing voters to smaller parties, and the left-leaning major opposition party takes a lead in the polls, putting Netanyahu's leadership in question, just as the U.S. wanted.

Netanyahu responds by using increasingly right-wing rhetoric (including denying that he ever agreed to the framework in question), to win back the voters from smaller parties that the leak cost him. He wins, and almost immediately announces that his campaign rhetoric was misunderstood, and that he still supports a two-state solution when conditions allow. The Obama Administration then announces it nevertheless has to reassess relations with Israel, allegedly because Netanyahu is no longer committed to the two-state solution. ...

Jonathan Tobin thinks it is time for the spiteful spat to end.

A week has now passed since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was re-elected in a decisive win that deeply disappointed the Obama administration that made no secret of its desire that he be defeated. But rather than cut its losses, the White House continues to dig itself in deeper in a conflict with the Israelis with an interview in which President Obama expressed concern for the future of Israeli democracy all the while making it clear that he would like to invalidate the verdict of Israeli voters. But that was not all. The president also sent his chief of staff to speak at the conference of the left-wing J Street lobby. There, James McDonough brought an audience of critics of Israel to its feet by vowing that the U.S. would not cease its efforts to force the Netanyahu government to "end 50 years of occupation." All of this stoking the fires of conflict forces us to ask why the president is so invested in this effort. The answer isn't reassuring, especially for those who wanted to believe the president's 2012 re-election pitch that claimed he was a true friend of Israel.

As I noted yesterday, one motive for the conflict with Israel is the disagreement over the Iran nuclear negotiations. The president clearly is not willing to get past his anger about Netanyahu speaking to Congress in opposition to the deal that the U.S. is offering the Iranian regime. With the talks moving into their final stages, it seems likely that Iran will sign an accord, especially

since, that country's so-called "hard-liners" appear to be thrilled with the concessions that their nation has forced out of an Obama administration so fixated on its goal of détente with the Islamist regime that it is willing to retreat from every principle it went into the talks to defend. ...

And Jennifer Rubin thinks the anti-Israel blitz has gone too far.

... The disparity between the president's treatment of Israel and his rush to embrace our enemy is so evident that even the mainstream media are forced to acknowledge it. The Hill reports: "Congress is growing hostile to the emerging nuclear deal with Iran, leaving President Obama with little political cover as he approaches a critical deadline in the talks. . . . But as details of the still-evolving talks have dribbled out of Geneva, where Secretary of State John Kerry is leading the process, lawmakers are amplifying concerns that the administration is granting too many concessions to Tehran." And when the New York Times starts raising the red flag that Obama may be "overplaying" his hand, you know things have gone way beyond anything we have seen in any prior administration. The Times agrees with many critics' assessment of what is going on:

"Israeli analysts are now suggesting that Mr. Obama and his aides might be overplaying their hand, inviting a backlash of sympathy for Mr. Netanyahu, and that they may not have clearly defined what they expected to gain diplomatically by continuing to pressure the Israeli leader.

The president's harsh words have been deemed by some to be patronizing and disrespectful not only to Mr. Netanyahu but also to the voters who rewarded his uncompromising stances with a resounding mandate for a fourth term."

The president is known to be vitriolic toward those who cross him, but what is going on here is more than peevishness. ...

Peter Wehner thinks the president has an ideological need to weaken Israel.

Why do the president and his advisers, when given the choice of how to interpret Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comments about a Palestinian state, choose the one that heightens tensions with Israel? Why the constant refrain that "We cannot pretend those comments were never made"? Why the inability to get over the fact that Netanyahu won (and in important respects Obama lost) the Israeli election? Why not move to repair relations?

Part of the answer is undoubtedly the personal pettiness of Mr. Obama and his apparently unquenchable hatred for the Israeli prime minister. But something more, something deeper, is going on here, too.

The president is using Prime Minister Netanyahu's comments to achieve an end he has clearly wanted all along: the weakening of the Jewish state. Mr. Obama is the product of a progressive milieu, including in the academy, where hostility to Israel is widespread. ...

And Doug Schoen, a Dem pollster says Bibi is here to stay, and it is time for the president to grow up.

... We don't have enough friends to be treating Netanyahu this way, even if he did advocate a single state solution in his campaign. And considering that just this week, we saw two horrendous acts of terrorism in the Middle East in Tunisia and Yemen, the reasons that Obama should firmly commit himself to Israel and Netanyahu continue to mount.

Further, the fact that just a few days ago John Kerry said the U.S. would be willing to negotiate with Syrian President Bashir al-Assad – who is responsible for the deaths of over 200,000 of his own people – while Netanyahu has to wait two days for a congratulatory call from President Obama is completely out of whack with everything I know about diplomacy and politics.

All this is to say that it's high time President Obama put aside his personal animus towards the Israeli Prime Minister. Netanyahu has a strong, convincing mandate to govern and there should be no doubt that we will need his friendship as the Iranian nuclear negotiations continue and beyond.

The prime minister is here to stay. It's time for the Obama White House to grow up and make the relationship work.

The cartoonists are good today; Michael Ramirez especially, who has the president saying, "We realize now ISIS is a big problem, so we have launched another attack - on George W. Bush."

Streetwise Professor

What Do You Get When You Cross Nero With Ahab?

by Craig Pirrong

Obama.

The world spins into chaos, and Obama is so detached and indifferent, fiddling while it all burns. But maybe the comparison with Nero is unfair. To Nero. After all, Nero allegedly had a purpose in mind when burning Rome: it allowed him to bypass the Senate and rebuild Rome to his grandiose plans. (Bypassing the Senate . . . maybe there are more parallels than I thought!) Obama just appears to not want to be bothered. Or perhaps he is like Major Major Major Major, promoted well above his competence and knowing it, and retreating to the confines of his office and quarters in order to avoid confronting things he is incapable of solving.

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right?) says the concept of relying on foreign governments to fight terrorism is right, even though the government we relied on in this case has utterly collapsed.

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But perhaps I am being harsh in saying that Obama doesn't care about defeat after defeat. After all, there is a collapse that makes him distraught. . . that [of his NCAA bracket](#).

But while he remains utterly detached from crises that threaten the world order, he persists in his Ahab-like pursuit of a deal with Iran. Empowering the mullahs (as a deal would do) will only further contribute to the already perilous situation in the Middle East, as a combination of national self-interest and religious hatred will force Gulf Sunnis (and arguably Egypt too) to confront a resurgent Iran freed from the shackles of sanctions, and progressing towards nuclear weapons.

And how does Obama rationalize negotiating a nuclear deal with a country that is openly supporting the overthrow of a government that he repeatedly identified as a major ally against Al Qaeda, and upon which the US has lavished billions of dollars in aid (much of which is in the hands of the Houthis, not to mention a major cache of US intelligence documents, which the Houthis obligingly turned over to Iran)? These are the people he trusts?

As I read somewhere: if he wanted to undermine America's national interests, what would he do differently?

National Review

Washington, D.C., comics: Dr. Ignoro vs. Bibi

by Jonah Goldberg

White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough recently spoke to J Street, a left-wing organization that fancies itself the headquarters of the tough-love-for-Israel crowd. J Street's critics would phrase it a bit differently. In a charitable mood, they'd say J Street is all about loving Israel to death.

Regardless, J Street is the perfect think tank for the Obama administration to get its message out. Which is why McDonough was there to deliver harsh criticism of Israel and to signal that the U.S., under President Obama at least, will not be as reliable an ally to Israel as it once was, particularly at the United Nations.

The ostensible reason for the breakdown in relations is that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won re-election by saying things the White House didn't like. Specifically, Netanyahu said that there would not be a two-state solution on his watch if he were re-elected. Netanyahu's point was merely that given the current circumstances in the Middle East and the disastrous experience of handing Gaza to Hamas, it's unlikely we'd see a two state solution anytime soon. But even if you were inclined to read something more nefarious into his remarks, Netanyahu has since modified -- or "walked back," as they say in diplomatic circles -- his statement.

Too bad, says the White House. Bibi said what he said. "We cannot simply pretend that those comments were never made," McDonough told the crowd at J Street.

There's nothing in the news accounts about whether the J Street audience burst into laughter or even if McDonough intended this as a laugh line. But intentional or not, it is hilarious.

For if there is one thing we know about Obama, it is this: He is very good at ignoring things he wants to ignore. If he were a superhero, he might be The Ignorator or perhaps Dr. Ignoro, complete with a cape, a giant "I" on his chest and his signature blinders blocking out all the inconvenient bits of life.

While the White House claims that it cannot pretend Netanyahu didn't make those remarks, it has no problem playing make-believe with comments from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (currently serving out the 10th year of his four-year term), who has repeatedly said the Palestinians will never recognize Israel as a Jewish state. Abbas, who literally has a Ph.D. in Holocaust denial, is what counts as a Palestinian moderate. Nonetheless, he formed a unity government with Hamas, the terrorist group openly determined to slaughter the Israelis.

But such facts are no match for Obama's limitless powers to pretend away annoying details. Why, just last week, Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, responded to chants of "Death to America" by saying, "Of course, yes, death to America." The White House is pretending he didn't make such comments. And when the administration gets a deal with the Iranians on their nuclear program, the president will take it to the U.N., not the Senate, because ignoring Congress -- and the Constitution -- is simply what he does on days that end with "y."

Barely six months ago, Obama cited Yemen as a great example of how successful his counterterrorism approach is. This week, as Yemen spiraled toward civil war and American military forces fled, Obama went golfing, ignoring the whole mess. (For Dr. Ignoro, the golf course is like his Batcave or Fortress of Solitude).

When his own advisers, military and civilian, warned Obama that fully bugging out of Iraq would be calamitous, leaving a vacuum for terrorists and Iranian meddling, the president ignored the advice and pretended everything was fine.

When a reporter for The New Yorker asked him about the Islamic State gobbling up Iraq, Obama explained why they should be ignored: They're just a "jayvee team," he said.

Obama is at his best when ignoring his own comments. His "red lines" are drawn in disappearing ink as far as he's concerned. Twenty-two times Obama said he didn't have the authority to unilaterally legalize immigrants. He did it anyway. You can keep your doctor and your insurance, he said -- before he stopped saying it.

So the notion this White House can't pretend Netanyahu didn't say what he said is simply hilarious, particularly given that what Netanyahu has said isn't what the White House is pretending to hear.

Of course, no informed person believes the White House is angry about how Netanyahu won re-election. It's angry that he was re-elected at all (unsurprising, given that Obama's political allies worked to oust him). Obama detests Netanyahu and is letting that animosity poison a strategic alliance. He is making that choice while pretending he isn't. That's what he does.

Power Line

Behind Obama's faux outrage at Netanyahu

by Paul Mirengoff

David Bernstein highlights the astonishing dishonesty behind President Obama's latest case of "faux outrage" at Benjamin Netanyahu. The premise for Obama's outrage is Netanyahu's statement just before the election that, given regional instability and the PA's collaboration with Hamas, there will be no Palestinian state under his watch.

Netanyahu has since softened this position a bit. But Team Obama harumphs that it doesn't believe the softened version and that election rhetoric has consequences.

Bernstein shows, however, that Obama knows the election rhetoric in question was a response to his own anti-Netanyahu electioneering — specifically to attempts by the president to alienate Netanyahu from his right-wing supporters:

On March 6, less than two weeks before the election, a major Israeli newspaper published a document showing that Netanyahu's envoy had agreed on his behalf to an American-proposed framework that offered substantial Israeli concessions that Netanyahu publicly opposed. Let's put on our thinking caps. Where would this leak have come from? The most logical suspect is the American State Department.

So here's the dynamic: Netanyahu, while talking tough publicly about terms for an Israeli-Palestinian deal, was much more accommodating privately during actual negotiations. Just before Israeli elections, the U.S. government likely leaks evidence of his flexibility to harm Netanyahu. As a result, Netanyahu starts to lose right-wing voters to smaller parties, and the left-leaning major opposition party takes a lead in the polls, putting Netanyahu's leadership in question, just as the U.S. wanted.

Netanyahu responds by using increasingly right-wing rhetoric (including denying that he ever agreed to the framework in question), to win back the voters from smaller parties that the leak cost him. He wins, and almost immediately announces that his campaign rhetoric was misunderstood, and that he still supports a two-state solution when conditions allow. The Obama Administration then announces it nevertheless has to reassess relations with Israel, allegedly because Netanyahu is no longer committed to the two-state solution.

In sum, Obama knows that Netanyahu has shown flexibility with the Palestinians during negotiations; tries to use this flexibility against Netanyahu in the election; and now uses Netanyahu's defense against Obama's gambit as the basis for attacking the Israeli prime

minister in the election's aftermath. Netanyahu responds that he is, in fact, amenable to negotiating flexibly. Team Obama, having almost surely leaked evidence of Netanyahu's flexibility, pretends not to believe that Netanyahu is flexible.

In a way, you have to admire the deep cynicism of Obama's game. If only he played anything approaching this level of hardball with Iran and Russia. Unfortunately, Iran and Russia aren't his enemies.

What is the purpose of Obama's dishonest attack on Netanyahu? Ideally, he'd like to pressure Netanyahu into making more concessions to the Palestinians than he previously has. There's a long pattern of manufacturing outrage at Netanyahu for this purpose.

But Obama probably understands that there isn't going to be a peace agreement during the relatively short remainder of his administration and that, thereafter, all bets are off. Thus, Obama's conniving conduct probably has an additional purpose.

Might that purpose be to alienate Israel from America, including American Jews? I suspect so.

Contentions

Obama's Pointless Israel Spats Illustrate Spite, Not Strategy

by Jonathan S. Tobin

A week has now passed since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was re-elected in a decisive win that deeply disappointed the Obama administration that made no secret of its desire that he be defeated. But rather than cut its losses, the White House continues to dig itself in deeper in a conflict with the Israelis with an interview in which President Obama expressed concern for the future of Israeli democracy all the while making it clear that he would like to invalidate the verdict of Israeli voters. But that was not all. The president also sent [his chief of staff to speak at the conference of the left-wing J Street lobby](#). There, James McDonough brought an audience of critics of Israel to its feet by vowing that the U.S. would not cease its efforts to force the Netanyahu government to "end 50 years of occupation." All of this stoking the fires of conflict forces us to ask why the president is so invested in this effort. The answer isn't reassuring, especially for those who wanted to believe the president's 2012 re-election pitch that claimed he was a true friend of Israel.

[As I noted yesterday](#), one motive for the conflict with Israel is the disagreement over the Iran nuclear negotiations. The president clearly is not willing to get past his anger about Netanyahu speaking to Congress in opposition to the deal that the U.S. is offering the Iranian regime. With the talks moving into their final stages, it seems likely that Iran will sign an accord, especially since, that country's so-called "hard-liners" appear to be thrilled with the concessions that their nation has forced out of an Obama administration so fixated on its goal of détente with the Islamist regime that it is willing to retreat from every principle it went into the talks to defend.

Suppressing criticism of the deal has become the top foreign policy priority for the White House and that means keeping the extravagant concessions made to Iran secret for as long as possible. [As our Max Boot noted earlier](#), the administration bizarrely claimed today that Israel was spying on U.S. negotiators with Iran and sharing the information with an entity that the

president considers a hostile power — Congress — while admitting that it knows this is true because of U.S. spying on Israel.

But while the nuclear issue and Obama's acquiescence to Iran's quest for regional hegemony is a huge part of the current tangle with Israel, that does not completely account for the administration's bold talk about reviving the dead-in-the-water peace process.

This has, after all, been a constant theme since the president took office in January 2009 determined to make a correction from what he felt was the Bush administration's coziness with Israel. Throughout the last six years, with only a one-year break for a re-election campaign Jewish charm offensive, President Obama has picked numerous fights with Netanyahu government over settlement building and borders as well as the status of Jerusalem. The goal throughout has been to persuade Israel to take "risks for peace" involving retreating from the West Bank and dividing Jerusalem.

This struggle has been undertaken in the name of saving Israel from itself because as the president noted in his Huffington Post interview, he wanted to preserve Israel's democracy. But, like his admirers among the crowd at J Street, at no point has the president chosen to hold the Palestinians accountable for their consistent rejection of Israeli peace offers or efforts to torpedo talks, such as the end run around negotiations and unity pact with Hamas that blew up the talks sponsored by Secretary of State John Kerry last year.

Nor is there any answer to the widespread concern voiced by Israeli voters about what would happen if their country heeded Obama's advice and withdrew from the West Bank, whether to the 1967 lines or not. After the example of Gaza, from which Israeli pulled out every last soldier and settler and which was then transformed into a vast terror base from which rockets are rained down on Israeli cities, why should Israelis believe a pullout from the West Bank end any differently.

Moreover, when McDonough speaks of "ending occupation," Palestinians hear something very different from Americans. When Fatah and Hamas talk about occupation they are referring not just to parts of the West Bank that even most Israelis would happily exit in exchange for true peace, but all of the country, including those parts that were not taken in the 1967 war. When such a high official uses language that is routinely employed by Hamas, albeit for different purposes, why should anyone be surprised if those terrorists regard the White House temper tantrum as a green light for a repeat of last summer's bloody and pointless war? If Obama was prepared to cut off arms resupply for the Israeli army during that conflict, what might he do next time?

One may disagree with Netanyahu on many things and even fervently advocate for a two-state solution and still understand that White House pressure on Israel about the Palestinians in the absence of any sign that the PA will ever make peace on any terms is utterly irresponsible. Until PA leader Mahmoud Abbas or his Hamas rivals have change their minds about refusing to agree to any deal that recognizes the legitimacy of a Jewish state no matter where its borders are drawn, a return to the table isn't merely pointless, it's an invitation to more mayhem as the Palestinians raise the ante in hopes that the U.S. will abandon its Israeli ally.

From January 2009 to the present, the conflict between Israel and the United States has never been connected to any real chance of peace or ending the conflict in a manner that is consistent with American pledges about ensuring the Jewish state's security. At this point, it is time for even those that have rationalized and apologized for Obama's penchant for attacking Israel to

face up to the fact that his behavior requires a better explanation than an alleged desire to save it from itself. Nor is the argument about Iran enough to justify what we are witnessing. Nothing about the current argument can be traced to U.S. security needs. Rather, its motive seems more about personal anger and vague ideological assumptions about Israel and the Palestinians that have no connection to reality.

That is a sobering thought that should motivate even those Democrats who are no fans of Netanyahu to begin speaking up against an administration policy that seems rooted in spite, not strategy.

Right Turn

Obama's anti-Israel blitz has gone too far

by Jennifer Rubin

At times President Obama sounds almost incoherent on Iran. On one hand he says, like the Israeli prime minister, that [he does not see a peace deal in the near future](#). ("What we can't do is pretend that there's a possibility for something that's not there. And we can't continue to premise our public diplomacy based on something that everybody knows is not going to happen at least in the next several years.") So they are on the same page? Nope. Obama insists, "We believe that two states is the best path forward for Israel's security, for Palestinian aspirations, and for regional stability. And Prime Minister Netanyahu has a different approach." Netanyahu has repeatedly said that is not the case, but Obama is determined to be disagreeable with Israel and overly solicitous toward Iran.

Meanwhile, the president chooses to ignore evidence that Iran is already refusing to comply with its obligations. [The Post reports](#):

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said that Iran has failed to provide the information or access needed to allay the agency's concerns about the weapons potential of the country's nuclear program.

With the deadline nearing for international talks on constraining Iran's nuclear program, Yukiya Amano, director general of the IAEA, said in an interview that Iran has replied to just one of a dozen queries about "possible military dimensions" of past nuclear activities.

Amano said that Iran has provided only "very limited" information about two other issues, while the rest have not been addressed at all.

"Recently, the progress is very limited," he said.

If the Iranians are behaving this way now, imagine how they will flout their obligations once they have pocketed concessions and sanctions relief. Since the White House has caved on allowing Iran to keep thousands of centrifuges, a deal must rely more heavily on inspections, which Iran has consistently thwarted. It also becomes doubly important to disclose past nuclear activities so that inspectors will know where to look. That has not happened either.

The disparity between the president's treatment of Israel and his rush to embrace our enemy is so evident that even the mainstream media are forced to acknowledge it. [The Hill reports](#): "Congress is growing hostile to the emerging nuclear deal with Iran, leaving President Obama with little political cover as he approaches a critical deadline in the talks. . . . But as details of the still-evolving talks have dribbled out of Geneva, where Secretary of State John Kerry is leading the process, lawmakers are amplifying concerns that the administration is granting too many concessions to Tehran." And when the [New York Times](#) starts raising the red flag that Obama may be "overplaying" his hand, you know things have gone way beyond anything we have seen in any prior administration. The Times agrees with many critics' assessment of what is going on:

Israeli analysts are now suggesting that Mr. Obama and his aides might be overplaying their hand, inviting a backlash of sympathy for Mr. Netanyahu, and that they may not have clearly defined what they expected to gain diplomatically by continuing to pressure the Israeli leader.

The president's harsh words have been deemed by some to be patronizing and disrespectful not only to Mr. Netanyahu but also to the voters who rewarded his uncompromising stances with a resounding mandate for a fourth term.

The president is known to be vitriolic toward those who cross him, but what is going on here is more than peevishness. Obama is on the cusp of achieving his grand design, remaking the Middle East so as to reconcile the United States with Iran and gain him a legacy-building achievement. But the idea is so preposterous — that we would kick Israel to the curb, allow Iran to run rampant in the region and ignore the mullahs' support of terrorism — that he must do backflips (sustaining a narrative to paint Netanyahu as a racist while conceding virtually every key point to Iran) that rightly alert both the media and lawmakers that something is very, very wrong here. And if that was not bizarre enough, the [administration keeps hinting](#) it may not reveal the contents of the deal until everything is sealed and delivered. Huh?! Only Obama and our fellow negotiators will know what is in it, but not allies, Congress or the American people? We've gone from the ridiculous to the absurd. Well, with a deal as bad as the one Obama is cooking up, I suppose keeping it secret is the best option. But wait, how will we know if Iran is abiding by — oh, never mind.

Both parties should call a halt to this circus, express strong bipartisan support for the original aims of the negotiations, issue a declaration in support of Israel, admonish the administration and see to set a new bar for talks with sanctions designed to wring more concessions out of Iran. Michael Makovsky, chief executive of JINSA, remarks, "The alternative is no deal for now, and working to apply more pressure and gain more leverage against Iran to try to get a better deal later." The president will claim it is this deal or war, but that's another false Obama choice. "Obama can begin to [regain leverage] by reversing course and supporting tough new sanctions. He could also gain more leverage by starting to coordinate closely with our close regional allies, Israel and the Sunni Arabs, and presenting a common front with them. That could begin by his stopping his Administration's verbal attacks and threats against Israel and its democratically elected prime minister," says Makovsky. "Also, he should begin to confront Iran in the region instead of suggesting non-opposition or support to Iranian enlargement of its influence across the Middle East. And he could seek to restore a credible military option against Iran's nuclear facilities, by the United States or through support for Israeli military action. If Obama took these steps, he could enhance the chance of reaching an acceptable nuclear deal with Iran." But he will not, and hence it is up to Congress to, as Makovsky put it, "conduct an intervention." Perhaps lawmakers can invite the leaders of France and Saudi Arabia, whose displeasure with the deal is now public, to speak to Congress.

Contentions

Obama Pursing His Ideological Ambition to Weaken Israel

by Peter Wehner

Why do the president and his advisers, when given the choice of how to interpret Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comments about a Palestinian state, choose the one that heightens tensions with Israel? Why the constant [refrain](#) that "We cannot pretend those comments were never made"? Why the inability to get over the fact that Netanyahu won (and in important respects Obama lost) the Israeli election? Why not move to repair relations?

Part of the answer is undoubtedly the personal pettiness of Mr. Obama and his apparently unquenchable hatred for the Israeli prime minister. But something more, something deeper, is going on here, too.

The president is using Prime Minister Netanyahu's comments to achieve an end he has clearly wanted all along: the weakening of the Jewish state. Mr. Obama is the product of a progressive milieu, including in the academy, where hostility to Israel is widespread.

As president, there have been constraints on how much Mr. Obama could do to undermine Israel. But the president has seized upon comments by Mr. Netanyahu leading up to the Israeli election to advance his agenda – in this case, considering reversing decades of U.S. policy by turning to the United Nations to impose a two-state solution. (This is only one piece in a much larger puzzle.)

For Mr. Obama, the comments by the Israeli prime minister were less an offense than an opportunity – and opportunity, in the president's mind, to put Israel in its place. This explains the unprecedented and unceasing attacks aimed at Mr. Netanyahu. The president and his White House are galvanized as never before; they are on a mission.

The fact that the mission itself is terribly misguided and pernicious doesn't seem to slow the president down one bit. He is a man in a hurry. And people who are in a hurry often act recklessly.

Mr. Obama is in the grip of a temper tantrum to be sure. But to focus on that, rather than the ideological project behind his actions, is to miss the full picture. Barack Obama is using the last few years of his presidency to further his left-wing ambitions in all sorts of ways, including inflicting massive damage on our relations with America's most reliable ally and one of the most estimable nations on earth.

For those of us who love America and Israel, this is a sad and shameful period. It's one that will thankfully pass — but between now and then, great and unnecessary harm is being done.

Fox News

Mr. Obama, Bibi Netanyahu is here to stay. It's time to grow up

by Douglas E. Schoen

Two days to make a phone call. U.N. threats. A recommitment to the Iran nuclear deal.

And that's just the way President Obama says congratulations.

In the three days since Benjamin Netanyahu's reelection, the Obama administration has made a concerted effort to further distance themselves from the Israeli prime minister, his policies and positions.

To this end, it's actually hard to believe from the way administration officials have been talking about Israel, that they're actually discussing our strongest democratic ally in the Middle East.

Three examples are illustrative.

President Obama himself told Netanyahu that the United State would have to "reassess our options" after his "new positions and comments" on the two state solution, the White House's preferred policies. (Netanyahu has since backtracked on his commitment to a single state solution).

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said at a press conference, "The United States and this administration are deeply concerned by divisive rhetoric that seeks to marginalize Arab-Israeli citizens. It undermines the values and democratic ideals that have been important to our democracy and an important part of what binds the United State and Israel together."

And State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki struck a similar tone. "The prime minister's recent statements call into question his commitment to a two-state solution. We're not going to prejudge what we would do if there was a U.N. action," she said.

I remain incredibly confused by the administration's attitude towards Israel and its leader, who can surely be difficult, but who boldly represents the interests of Israel and Jews in the region and around the world.

At a time when ISIS's power is growing and other terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah are wielding control across the Middle East, it seems like the absolute worst time to be giving an ally the cold shoulder.

We don't have enough friends to be treating Netanyahu this way, even if he did advocate a single state solution in his campaign. And considering that just this week, we saw two horrendous acts of terrorism in the Middle East in Tunisia and Yemen, the reasons that Obama should firmly commit himself to Israel and Netanyahu continue to mount.

Further, the fact that just a few days ago John Kerry said the U.S. would be willing to negotiate with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad – who is responsible for the deaths of over 200,000 of his own people – while Netanyahu has to wait two days for a congratulatory call from President Obama is completely out of whack with everything I know about diplomacy and politics.

All this is to say that it's high time President Obama put aside his personal animus towards the Israeli Prime Minister. Netanyahu has a strong, convincing mandate to govern and there should be no doubt that we will need his friendship as the Iranian nuclear negotiations continue and beyond.

The prime minister is here to stay. It's time for the Obama White House to grow up and make the relationship work.



OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY

'The day I'm inaugurated the muslim world will look at the U.S. differently.'

~Candidate Obama, 21 Nov 2007

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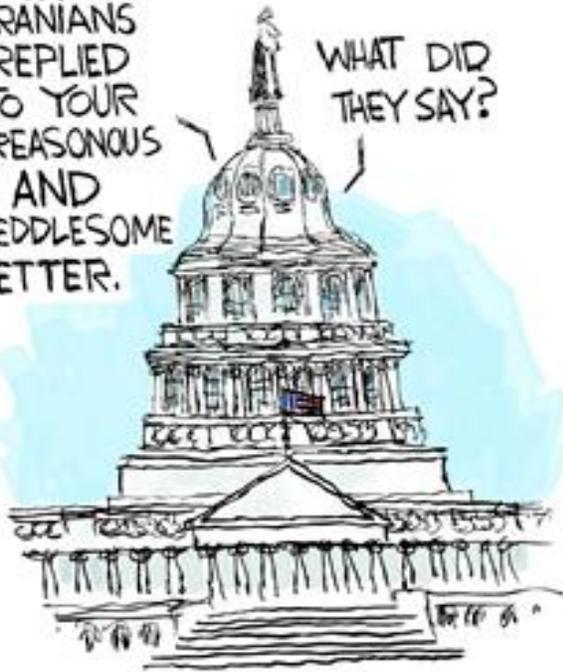
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