



ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

Jewish State. In this part of the world, that amounts to an invitation to an open season on Israel.

It is hard to believe that the Obama Middle East agenda enjoys the support of the American people or their elected representatives in

Commentary...

Obama Sows A Mideast Whirlwind By Frank Gaffney, Jr.

From this vantage point, two events this week appear to be ominous straws in the wind, warnings of a "man-caused" maelstrom that may inexorably plunge the Middle East into another, potentially cataclysmic war.

The first is the fact that Israel feels obliged to undertake an unprecedented, country-wide civil defense exercise this week. At one point in its course, every man, woman and child in the Jewish State is supposed to seek shelter from a simulated attack of the kind Iran may shortly be able to execute against it.

The second is President Obama's latest effort to reach out to the Muslim world, this time on June 4 from one of its most important capitals, Cairo. There, he is expected to make an address that will reiterate his previous statements on the subject - pronouncements that, unfortunately, can only have been interpreted by his intended audience as acts of submission.

If past is prelude, the President of the United States will: apologize yet again for purported offenses against Muslims by his country; promise to be respectful of Islam, including those who adhere to its authoritative, if virulent, theo-political-legal program known as Shariah; and enunciate diplomatic priorities and initiatives designed to reach out to America's enemies in the region, while putting excruciating pressure on its most reliable ally there, Israel.

This pressure has become more palpable by the day. It has taken various forms, including: U.S. stances adopted at the United Nations that will serve to isolate Israel; blank political and even financial checks for Palestinian thugs like Mahmoud Abbas; diminishing U.S.-Israeli cooperation on intelligence and military matters; and the withholding from Israel of helicopters (and perhaps other weaponry) being provided to Arab states.

Perhaps the most chilling example of this coercive pressure so far, however, was originally reported in the Israeli paper Yediot Aharonot and given international prominence by my esteemed colleague and Jerusalem Post columnist, Caroline Glick. According to these accounts, in a recent lecture in Washington, U.S. Army Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, the American officer charged with training Palestinian military forces in Jordan, made a shocking declaration.

In Ms. Glick's words, "[Gen. Dayton] indicated that if Israel does not surrender Judea and Samaria within two years, the Palestinian forces he and his fellow American officers are now training at a cost of more than \$300 million could begin killing Israelis." She went on to note that neither the general nor the Obama administration seemed to find this prospect grounds for rethinking the wisdom of such a training-and-arming program. In fact, her column observed that Defense Secretary Robert Gates "just extended Dayton's tour of duty for an additional two years and gave him the added responsibility of serving as Obama's Middle East mediator George Mitchell's deputy."

Taken together with the U.S. administration's refusal to come to grips with what truly is the most serious threat to peace in the Middle East - Iran's rising power and growing aggressiveness, reflecting in part its incipient nuclear weapons capabilities - the stage is being inexorably set for the next, and perhaps most devastating, regional conflict.

Whether the signals Mr. Obama is sending are intended to communicate such a message or not, they are going to be read by Israel's enemies as evidence of a profound rift between the United States and the

Congress. Historically, the public and strong bipartisan majorities on Capitol Hill have appreciated that an Israel that shares our values, that is governed democratically and that is in the cross-hairs of the same people who seek our destruction is an important ally. Quite apart from a sense of moral and religious affinity for the Jewish people's struggle to survive in their ancient homeland, most of us recognize that it is in the United States' strategic interest to stand with Israel.

It is worrisome in the extreme that Mr. Obama does not appear to share this appreciation. To those who worried about his affinity for the Saudi king and Islam more generally and his longstanding ties to virulent critics of Israel like Columbia University professor Rashid Khalidi and former Harvard professor-turned-National Security Council staffer Samantha Power, the President's attitude is not exactly a surprise. His administration's posture may have been further reinforced by Arab-American pollster John Zogby's recent Forbes Magazine article arguing that friends of Israel made up John McCain's constituency, not Obama's. (This raises an interesting question about the sentiments towards Israel of the 78% of American Jews who voted for the latter in 2008.)

My guess, however, is that, as the implications of President Obama's Mideast policies - for the United States as well as Israel - become clearer, he is going to find himself facing the sort of popular and congressional revolt that has confronted him in recent weeks on Guantanamo Bay. The question is: Will such a reaffirmation of American solidarity with and support for Israel come in time to prevent the winds of war being whipped up by Mr. Obama's posturing and rhetoric - and driving Israelis into bomb shelters - from wreaking havoc in the Middle East, and perhaps far beyond? (Center for Security Policy Jun 1)

The Israel Lobby -- Missing in Action By Jonathan Rosenblum

In their 2007 book *The Israel Lobby*, Professors John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt argued that there exists a loose coalition of groups that attempts to steer American policy in a pro-Israel direction at a high cost to American national interests. Mearsheimer and Walt's definition of pro-Israel was so broad and their sense of how injurious Israel's existence is to America so deep that, in their telling, the "Israel Lobby" is both all-powerful and all-inclusive. Nevertheless, at the center of Mearsheimer and Walt's "Israel Lobby" are American Jews -- the villainous neo-cons and the pro-Israel lobbying organization AIPAC chief among them.

The sad truth, however, is that if an Israeli Lobby exists, American Jews have failed to enlist. American Jews are demonstrably innocent of putting Israel's interests first, or even high, on their list of concerns -- at least if Israel's interests have anything to do with how they are defined by the overwhelming consensus of Jews living in Israel.

A vast majority of Israeli Jews would be prepared to cede a good deal of the West Bank in return for peace. But the experience of the last fifteen years has convinced them that peace cannot be obtained without a dramatic reformation of Palestinian society. From the standpoint of the Israeli consensus, the Obama administration's obsessive mantra about the necessity of Israel declaring its support for the "two-state solution" is misguided, for it sends the wrong messages to both Israelis and Palestinians.

By focusing on what Israel must do, that mantra ignores what it has already done, and the lessons learned from its past actions. Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank, southern Lebanon, and Gaza, resulted in their becoming launching pads for suicide bombers and rockets aimed at Israeli civilians. Those withdrawals did not even improve Israel's

international standing.

The focus on Israel's next step ignores those never taken by the Palestinians -- i.e., moving one iota from any of their positions as of the outset of Oslo. And it conveys the message that nothing is expected of the Palestinians in the future, unlike the Road Map, which made the Palestinians oft-promised end to incitement and terrorism preconditions for further negotiations.

Palestinian statehood, not peace, has become the watchword of American policy. And to that end, the Obama administration has indicated a willingness to impose a solution. National Security Advisor James Jones recently conveyed to a senior European official that "an endgame solution" would be formulated by the U.S., EU, and moderate Arab states, with Israel and the Palestinians relegated to the role of bystanders. On a happy note, he allowed that Israel would "not be thrown under the bus." That same week the chief U.S. arms negotiator called for Israel to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty - a clear break with a forty year understanding between the U.S. and Israel on the issue, and an equally clear indication of how nasty the pressure on Israel might get.

The theory of an imposed solution is that the final contours of a settlement are already well known so it might as well be now. Even if the former proposition were true, the intention of the parties and their ability to perform would still be relevant. The Palestinians cannot run a state - certainly not one that Hamas would not quickly take over - nor do they seek to. Palestinian human rights activist Bassam Eid declared after the Hamas-Fatah civil war in Gaza, "We do not deserve a state." Fatah prefers the present kleptocracy to a state. Statelessness allows Palestinians to attack Israel without being held responsible, as would a state, and to remain the world's favorite mendicants.

Meanwhile the contrast between the Obama administration's urgency with respect to the Palestinian-Israeli tract and its lackadaisical approach to Iran's nuclear ambitions could not be starker. The linkage of Iran to progress on the former is backwards. No more than a year likely remains to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions. Peace will not in that period to a region in which there is still no Palestinian leader who can even recognize Israel's right to be a Jewish state.

The Sunni states fear a nuclear Iran much more than Israel, and they are saying so. They will support an alliance against Iran because it is their interests to do so, as long as they believe America will act decisively and not leave them to Iran's tender mercies.

What has been the response of American Jewry and the vaunted Israel Lobby to the mounting threats to Israel abetted by Washington? Silence. President Obama's popularity among American Jews remains sky high and rising. Delegates at the recent AIPAC convention dutifully lobbied Congress for the two-state solution. Whom, one wonders, was this feared group lobbying against?

The overwhelming American Jewish support for President Obama demonstrates how far the perspectives of Israeli and American Jews have diverged. For Israeli Jews survival remains the primary desideratum. For American Jews the simulacrum of peace, in the form of a treaty, any treaty, is primary.

For many American Jews, an Israel without peace is misbegotten, not worth the scorn it engenders in The New York Times and on Ivy League campuses. Daniel Gordis records, in his important new book *How Israel Can Win a War That May Never End*, being asked by an American Jewish friend: "Why has Israel given up hope?" And with no genuine chance for peace, why forge on?"

It is left to Gordis's teenage daughter Talia to set their visitor straight: The purpose of Israel is not to achieve peace with the Arabs, however devoutly such peace might be wished for. Israelis have not given up hope, just hope for peace in the near future.

American Jews remained largely quiescent during the Holocaust, in part because of their adulation of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who could do no wrong in their eyes. Stephen Wise, the most influential voice in American Jewry, could not overcome his worship of FDR to challenge the latter's position that nothing could be done to save Jews other than win the War. (David Wyman's *The Abandonment of the Jews* seeringly details how much could have been done.)

To avoid embarrassing or pressuring the President, Wise sat on a telegram from Gerhard Riegner of the World Jewish Congress in August 1942, detailing plans to exterminate three to four million Jews in German-

controlled Europe, until pressured by the Orthodox and Revisionist Zionists to do something.

American Jews are besotted again. This time the object of their affections is President Barack Obama, who has consciously fashioned himself the new FDR. And a little matter like Israel will not cool their ardor. President Obama, like President Clinton before him, has proven that a Democratic president can sell American Jewry any policy to Israel, as long as it is packaged in sufficient expressions of concern for Israel's well-being.

The Israel Lobby of Walt and Mearsheimers febrile imaginations never existed. And never has that been so obvious as today. (Jewish Media Resources May 28)

So What's Your Solution? By Moshe Arens

The supporters of the "two-state" solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have a sure way of nonplussing those who express reservations about it. Just look them in the eye and ask "so what's your solution?" The answer to this attack should be an invitation to sit back, relax and analyze the problem for a few moments. Let's agree on a few axioms that any proposed solution should not violate.

Axiom No. 1. Jews have a right to settle and live in the Land of Israel. This right is founded not only on the Bible and the history of the Jewish people, but has also been recognized by the international community in the League of Nations mandate for Palestine, a recognition that has never been revoked. It is true that some people do not recognize this right. The Palestinian Authority has a law on its books providing the death penalty for selling land to a Jew. It may be that Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton do not recognize this right, but they should be reminded of the time when there were restricted communities in the United States where Jews were not allowed to live. That kind of restriction is long gone in the U.S. and should certainly not be applied now in the Land of Israel.

Axiom no. 2. There is a limit to the size of the minority population that can be included within the borders of the State of Israel without endangering the Jewish state's ethnic coherence. Just what that limit is depends on the degree of integration of these minorities into Israeli society. Whereas Israel has been very successful in this area with the Druze and the small Circassian community, by virtue of their service in the Israel Defense Forces, it has yet to seriously tackle the challenge of integrating Israel's Arab population. There is no reason to assume that we have already reached the upper limit, but we may not be far from it.

Axiom no. 3. No populated region on this earth will remain permanently without some national sovereignty. The present status of Judea and Samaria and Gaza is an anomaly that will not last.

Axiom no. 4. Jordan is a Palestinian state. Seventy percent of its population is Palestinian, and if its Bedouin are to be counted as Palestinians, as they are in Israel, then its entire population is Palestinian. This is a statement of fact and does not preclude the establishment of a second or third Palestinian state.

So what are the possible alternative solutions that do not violate these axioms? Here are four.

1. Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip become a Palestinian state - the "two-state" solution.
2. Judea and Samaria become a Palestinian state, and the Gaza Strip becomes another Palestinian state - the "three-state" solution.
3. Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip are incorporated into Jordan.
4. Judea and Samaria are incorporated into Jordan, and the Gaza Strip is incorporated into Egypt - more or less a return to the situation before the Six-Day War. It is hard to think of any additional solutions that do not violate the four axioms, but let us now look at implementing these solutions.

It turns out that the precondition for implementing any of the four is the elimination of Palestinian terrorism. The withdrawal of the IDF from Judea and Samaria would turn the area, much of it next to Israel's major cities, into bases for acts of terror against Israel's civilian population, whether by suicide bombers or rockets. Inevitably the IDF would have to respond against the areas from which these acts of terror originated.

In other words, neither the "two-state" nor "three-state" solution can be implemented before Palestinian terrorism has been suppressed. The same is true, although not quite in the same sense, for the third and fourth alternatives. Both Jordan and Egypt have shown that they are capable of

dealing with the danger of terrorism. The Jordanian security services have been successfully dealing with Palestinian terrorism ever since "Black September" in 1970. The Egyptians have been dealing with Muslim Brotherhood terrorism, and in recent years with Hamas and Hezbollah. However, neither would be prepared to risk overloading that capability by incorporating terrorist-infested areas into their territory. The defeat of Palestinian terrorism could open the possibility of implementing any of the four solutions.

The inescapable conclusion is that Palestinian terrorism has to be eliminated before seriously approaching any of the alternate solutions. At the moment, the "two-state" solution is a fantasy. This will sooner or later become clear to Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. So what's your solution? (Haaretz Jun 2)

Arabs vs. Iranians, Courtesy of the Jews By Reuel Marc Gerecht

Americans like to think big in foreign policy, so they yearn to settle the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Both Democrats and Republicans have repeatedly tried to rally the region's denizens for a "comprehensive settlement" and thereby transform the Middle East. George W. Bush's desire to change the region's politics by establishing a democracy in Iraq actually seems more timid, invested with fewer questionable assumptions, than the proposition that a settlement of the 60-year-old Israeli-Palestinian imbroglio will fundamentally change America's standing among Muslims.

Nevertheless, confronted with the likelihood of an Iranian nuclear weapon, the Obama administration is loading ever more strategic expectations onto the people of the Holy Land. "For Israel to get the kind of strong support it's looking for vis-à-vis Iran," warned Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "it can't stay on the sidelines with respect to the Palestinians and the peace efforts." The two "go hand in hand."

According to Clinton, Arab states want "very much to support the strongest possible posture toward Iran. . . . They believe that Israel's willingness to reenter into discussions with the Palestinian Authority strengthens them in being able to deal with Iran." But does this really make sense? Might it be more likely that by throwing an American spotlight again on the Israelis and the Palestinians and the latter's internal differences, the president will unintentionally help the Iranians more than us? The president could well, through determined efforts to bring peace, scare and weaken the Arab leaders he wants to help and further isolate the Israelis, leaving them on their own when it comes to stopping the Iranian quest for a bomb. Like its predecessor, the Obama White House is slowly backing into a containment strategy against the clerical regime. Unfortunately, what worked against the Soviet Union is unlikely to work against Iran.

Unstated in Secretary Clinton's warning is the assumption that an Arab bloc could be assembled to oppose Iran, and that this would benefit Israel and the United States. But for all practical purposes we've seen an Arab bloc of Sunni dictators, kings, and sheikhs opposed to the Islamic Republic since 1979. And the results have been mixed. When Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in 1980, he had the sympathy of most Arab leaders. When his war started to go badly after the Iranian victory of Khorramshahr in 1982, he had the active support of the Gulf Arab states, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Their financial aid mattered. Without their support, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's die-hard believers probably would have collapsed the Baathist state.

This is the only instance of an Arab bloc producing a clear strategic victory over Iran. There is no contemporary parallel to the Iran-Iraq war alliance that could plausibly benefit either Israel or the United States. Iraq's Shiite majority, though far from an ally of Tehran, absolutely doesn't want to resuscitate the Sunni Arab vision of their country as a mailed fist against the Persian horde. The Iraqi Shia view themselves as being the victims of homegrown Sunni Arab dictators who regularly used pan-Arabism and the Iranian bogeyman--both Pahlavi and clerical--as a justification for oppression of Shiites.

When officials of the Bush administration tried to depict post-Saddam, democratic Iraq as a bulwark against Iran, Shiite Iraqi officials and clerics cringed. Historically the most religiously consequential land outside of Arabia--all of the most holy cities of Shiism are within its borders--Iraq never again wants to play in any Arab cold war against the region's Shiite powerhouse. Such a contest could only roil Iraq's still-dicey intercommunal relations, needlessly antagonize Tehran--which has shown itself willing to

intrude lethally in Iraq's politics--and put the Iraqi Shia community perversely on the side of the much-disliked Sunni kingdoms of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the most anti-Shiite country in the world. So with Iraq out, the Obama administration can't suggest that an anti-Iranian Arab alliance could militarily intimidate the mullahs. Against Iran, there are only two countries that matter militarily: the United States and Israel.

But perhaps it is an Arab alliance capable of intimidating Iran economically or spiritually that Secretary Clinton has in mind, once the Israelis make concessions to the Palestinians. This also seems far-fetched. Sunni Arab states have never effectively implemented economic sanctions against Iran since (1) they really don't have anything to sanction--trade between the Islamic Republic and Sunni Arab states is so small as to be meaningless to the oil-based Iranian economy--and (2) most Arab states are connoisseurs of an Italian economic ethic: They will trade with their worst enemies, even if they don't do so openly. It's a very good bet that the commercially minded friends and family of Egypt's ruler, Hosni Mubarak, who has for two years been warning his fellow Sunni Arabs about a rising Shiite menace, would gladly cut trade deals with Iran's commercial elite.

This leaves us with the realm of soft power and the battle of religious ideas. Since 1979, a massive struggle has been taking place between Saudi Arabia and clerical Iran. The two countries, which see themselves as vanguards of the faithful and represent different but overlapping strains of Islamic fundamentalism, loathe each other. It is impossible to overstate the effect that their missionary tug of war has had on the practice of Islam in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Europe.

With nearly limitless funding and the advantage of holding to globally predominant Sunni Islam, Saudi Arabia decisively won the first round. The Saudi creed, Wahhabism, has pushed the Sunni identity in Arab lands in a profoundly conservative direction since the Islamic revolution. Institutions, like Egypt's al-Azhar seminary, that once stood as bulwarks against the crude Wahhabi faith, have largely been coopted through Saudi-financed endowments and scholarships. The contemporaneous collapse of the political legitimacy of Arab secular dictatorships--in Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser was popular; his successor Anwar Sadat was increasingly disliked; his successor Hosni Mubarak is despised--has further opened the field to Islamist organizations, usually funded much more generously by the Saudis than by the Iranians. The communications revolution of the 1980s and 1990s allowed Muslim fundamentalists everywhere to propagate their views more efficiently and give each other spiritual reinforcement. At just the right moment, the Soviet-Afghan war (1979-89) gave the Sunni world's most militant and intrepid jihadists a place to coalesce and refine their thoughts and skills.

This fundamentalist renaissance wouldn't have been so intense without Saudi cash, and it certainly fortified anti-Shiite tendencies among many Sunnis. But a funny thing has happened in the last 15 years: Revolutionary Iran's Islamic message has become a lot less Shiite, and the Sunni world's embrace of revolutionary martyrdom and resistance to illegitimate government has become more Shiite. With deep roots in Islamic history, martyrdom isn't a Shiite Iranian invention, but the modern theological sharpening of this instrument done by revolutionary Iranians and their Arab offspring, the Lebanese Hezbollah, produced a holy-warrior mentality in the early 1980s that was deeply admired by Sunni militants. And as radical Islam has modernized and globalized, its traditional divisions--Shiism versus Sunnism is one of the oldest--have become less important than modern "values," such as anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Zionism.

There is still usually no love lost between Sunni and Shiite militants, but they can cooperate for higher causes, and the most felicitous common ground is their hatred of the United States, the cutting edge of the culture-destroying, female-liberating West, and its Palestinian-oppressing advance guard, Israel. This explains why al Qaeda militants would accept, and the clerical regime would offer them, laissez-passers even though elements of al Qaeda are virulently anti-Shiite. This explains why the Sunni fundamentalist mother ship, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, never an enthusiastically anti-Shiite organization, has become almost pro-Iranian; and why Hamas, a Palestinian offshoot of the Brotherhood, has gladly accepted arms and money from Tehran and shows no sign of diminishing its ties to the mullahs despite increasing pressure from the Mubarak government and Saudi Arabia, which also funds Hamas, to do so. The considerable popularity among Sunni Arabs of Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah and Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stems directly

from their uncompromising, loud opposition to American influence and to the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East.

The Obama administration appears to believe that having the rulers of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia threaten to ramp up their rhetoric against the clerical regime would hurt the Islamic Republic. Although not particularly bold against Iran publicly, the Saudis are livid in private about recent Shiite riots in their own oil-rich Eastern Province and in Bahrain, where it is assumed, not necessarily correctly, that Iran had a hand in the trouble. Saudi Arabia may well again increase its funding for anti-Iranian missionary work. It's a decent bet that Saudi Arabia will soon put pressure on impoverished Pakistan--which may have received financial assistance from Riyadh to build its "Muslim bomb"--to give the kingdom nuclear weapons if Iran goes nuclear. Neither America nor Israel can expect any good to come from this.

While Iraq's Sunni community was losing the battle of Baghdad in 2006-07, President Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah let loose a barrage of anti-Shiite diatribes aimed at the Iranians and the Iraqi and Lebanese Shia. Their efforts to paint a menacing Shiite arc, ready to strike at the Arab Sunni heartland like a scimitar, fell flat, especially in Egypt, where the population has certain Shiite sympathies. Both men still lobby vigorously against Iran behind closed doors, as do many of the fearful Arab Sunni potentates of the Persian Gulf states, but they are now more guarded in public. Mubarak is in the unenviable position of having the reverse-Midas touch. If he's for something, the odds are good that a substantial portion of the Egyptian people would question whether it's in their best interest. (Iran's clerical overlords actually have a similar problem. This is one reason America's image in the Islamic Republic has improved as the clerical regime has grown increasingly unpopular, and why even in the clerical stronghold of Qom young men and women mock the much-disliked ruling elite by joking about "Palestine"--a once holy cause that the young no longer find so sacred.)

Although Mubarak's commitment to the peace process is very much in question (we can only assume that Clintonites serving in the Obama administration recall how assiduously Mubarak worked to undermine Palestinian-Israeli negotiations at the end of Bill Clinton's presidency), what isn't in question is how powerful the Muslim Brotherhood has become in Egypt. There are many reasons for this, but a not insignificant one is the Brotherhood's unflinching hostility to the idea of a Jewish state in the Middle East.

To Egyptian Sunnis, Iran's highly restricted democracy-cum-theocracy can actually appear progressive. Ali Larijani, one of the brightest, best-educated, and most lethal of Iran's ruling elite, loves to highlight the likelihood of fundamentalists' gaining political dominance in the Arab world if democracy spreads. No friend of representative government at home, Larijani is a big fan of it among Sunni Arabs. It's a perverse situation for the United States: We back the corrupt autocrats, while the Iranian regime champions political reform, which probably would give significant political clout, if not outright dominance, to Muslim fundamentalists who have much more in common ideologically with Iran's Islamists than with the United States. Among devout Sunni Arabs--easily over half the population in Egypt--Iran has the rhetorical high ground.

A loud Obama push for the peace process is much more likely to strengthen the Egyptian Brotherhood than weaken it. This is why Mubarak would probably repeat his behind-the-scenes sabotage of any meaningful negotiations that got off the ground. But it is highly unlikely that meaningful negotiations can begin, given the power of Hamas among Palestinians and the decrepitude of Fatah's Palestinian Authority under Mahmoud Abbas.

What Mubarak needs most is American money and military hardware and some political means to put Hamas off balance in Gaza. But under no circumstances would he permit sufficient political progress among Palestinians that he could be labeled by the Muslim Brotherhood a betrayer of the faith. Nor would Mubarak ever dare favor dropping the demand for a Palestinian "right of return"--a nonnegotiable point for any Israeli government since the right of return would mean the end of the Jewish state. Although the peace-processing establishment in Washington may not admit it, Muslim fundamentalists have probably decisively won the argument about the illegitimacy of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in the one country indispensable for any settlement: Egypt. Iran, not the United States, is playing the stronger hand here. Quite unintentionally, Obama is ready to make Iran stronger where it matters most.

Sooner or later it's going to dawn on the administration, and others raised on the successful containment of the Soviet Union, that there is no way we can contain the Islamic Republic. Unless America's armed forces shrink considerably, the United States can always repulse any Iranian military aggression--assuming we have the will to do so in the face of threatened nuclear retaliation. But that's not where the Iranians are likely to probe, even once armed with the bomb.

The Islamic Republic was born as a revolutionary state that believed passionately in the power of ideas, backed up always by a good deal of nefarious activity. Ali Khamenei, Iran's clerical overlord, no less than his predecessor, Ayatollah Khomeini, devoutly believes in a Middle East free of American influence. He too sees Israel as an insult to all that he holds holy. He is, however, no fool: He's been a pretty patient and pragmatic revolutionary.

Khamenei and the ruling clerical elite will just keep pushing on the increasingly fundamentalist seams of the Middle East's increasingly modern, troubled societies. In Hamas, they may well have found faithful Palestinians who will repeatedly confront the Israelis head on. United under Iran's leadership, the Sunni and Shiite faithful will wear the Jews down, so the vision goes, in the same way that devout, uncompromising Muslims finally pushed the militarily accomplished crusaders out of the Near East. A profound love of paralleling Israel's end with the demise of the crusader states is just one of many things that radical Sunnis and Shiites have in common.

So are economic sanctions the answer? It's difficult to imagine the Europeans' doing what would be necessary. Any serious sustained sanctions regime against the Islamic Republic must target the energy sector. The Iranians would be able to show easily the human suffering that comes with such measures. It's extremely unlikely the Europeans--who still recoil from the real civilian damage done to Iraq by Western sanctions against Saddam, who did his best to amplify and parade his people's pain--would have the stomach to hurt Iran.

Instead, Europeans' commercial appetites will continue to reinforce their moral sensibilities. The Islamic Republic offers a much more complex picture of good and evil cohabiting within the same society than did Baathist Iraq. Iran's exquisite contradictions--its age-old beauty that so easily enraptures--will make it virtually impossible for the United States to sustain sanctions that are more than seriously annoying. Obama, who fiercely criticized George Bush's unilateralism, will not want to alienate Europeans by trying to coerce them into sanctions with bite. Measures that only annoy Tehran will be enough neither to stop the nuke nor to change the regime.

The day after the mullahs test their nuke--as they probably will, to make sure that we know they have it--we are likely to see any European resolve in favor of sanctions evaporate rapidly. The appeasement-cum-engagement reflex will kick in heavily. As in the Cold War, the United States cannot box in the enemy all by itself. We need the Europeans. And they are unlikely to be sufficiently helpful.

Which brings us back to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process: It is at best irrelevant to our efforts to tame the Islamic Republic, though it could well hurt us. A sensible, historically sensitive onlooker can only laugh contemplating what Jordan and Egypt could do against Iran. They are weak states (blessed with highly proficient internal-security services) whose leaders no longer possess much ideological or religious clout, even within their own borders. As for Saudi Arabia, the last thing in the world we ought to want to see happen is the Saudis trying to line up Sunni fundamentalists against the mullahs. It's not 1979. Their best efforts are likely to backfire horribly. And the thought of Saudi Arabia, where al Qaeda is strong and your ordinary Wahhabi believer is frightful, possessing nukes is enough to make any Israeli--or American--believe in the apocalypse.

Truth be told, unless the Iranians do something really stupid--like sponsor another terrorist attack against the United States or our allies, and thereby force Obama to contemplate preemptive strikes against the Islamic Republic's nuclear facilities--the Israelis are all alone. No one is coming to their rescue. (Weekly Standard Jun 1)

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