



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*

Still, all of the above begs two questions. First, if Israel's main concern is preventing millions of Palestinians from flooding the country, why muddy the waters by demanding recognition as a Jewish state? Why not simply reiterate its

Commentary...

The Only State In The World Whose Existence Is Deemed Negotiable

By Evelyn Gordon

To mainstream Israelis, Binyamin Netanyahu's demand that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state is self-evidently just. Yet many in the West, the Arab world and even Israel's left reject it utterly.

Meeting in Luxembourg last Monday, European foreign ministers said conditions such as this were unacceptable. Former US president Jimmy Carter echoed this comment. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak declared that "nobody in Egypt or anywhere else... can recognize Israel as the state of the Jews"; pro-government papers in Jordan and Saudi Arabia published similar statements. The Palestinians said they will never accept this demand. Even some Israelis objected: Peres Center for Peace president Uri Savir termed it "unnecessary" in this paper on Friday; columnist Yoel Marcus labeled it "idiotic" in Friday's Haaretz; Yonatan Touval of the Geneva Initiative called it "absurd" and "deeply harmful" in The New York Times last month.

Opponents raise three main objections. First, Israel never demanded recognition as a Jewish state in its peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, so this is clearly not essential for peace. Second, the Palestinians will never accept it, so not only is it unnecessary, it is an obstacle to peace. And third, the Palestinians should not accept it, because it would undermine the rights of Israel's Arab minority.

The flaw in the first two arguments is that they overlook a crucial distinction: Neither Egypt nor Jordan ever sought to eradicate Israel's Jewish character via their peace treaties; their demands were confined to mundane issues such as territory and water rights. The Palestinians, in contrast, are actively seeking to eradicate Israel's Jewish character via a peace treaty.

Specifically, they demand the right to relocate 4.6 million Palestinian refugees and their descendants (UNRWA's figure) to Israel - a demand from which they have never budged in 16 years of negotiations. This influx, combined with the 1.5 million Arab citizens, would make its 5.6 million Jews a minority in their own country, effectively eradicating the Jewish state.

Thus it is the Palestinians, not Israel, who have placed its Jewish character on the negotiating table. Netanyahu, far from raising new and irrelevant demands, is merely responding to theirs.

Moreover, far from being an obstacle to peace, Netanyahu's demand is indeed essential to it - because the Jewish state will never agree to abolish itself via a peace treaty. Hence until the Palestinians stop demanding that it do so, no treaty will be possible.

The third argument, in contrast, is simply ridiculous. Since this already is a Jewish state, Palestinian recognition of this fact would in no way worsen Israeli Arabs' existing situation. Nor would it preclude them from using democratic means to try to change its Jewish character from within: They are not citizens of Palestine, so Palestinian commitments do not bind them.

Indeed, the only effect Palestinian recognition of Israel's Jewish character could have on Israeli Arabs is forcing them to abandon the delusion of someday eliminating it via mass Palestinian immigration. But since not even the most sweeping definition of democratic rights includes allowing national minorities to take over their country by importing millions of their fellow nationals, depriving Israeli Arabs of this delusion in no way violates their rights.

long-standing position - which most of the West accepts - that the refugees and their descendants must be resettled elsewhere? And second, why should recognition of its Jewish character be a precondition for negotiations, as Netanyahu initially demanded - though he has since shamefully backtracked? To answer these questions, it is necessary to ask a third one: If Palestinian recognition of Israel's Jewish character is so important, why did it not raise this demand in 1993, when talks began? The answer is that then, it assumed both sides were negotiating in good faith, making it unnecessary to spell out the obvious endgame of two states, one Jewish and one Palestinian. And indeed, the original Oslo Accord mentions neither a Jewish state nor a Palestinian one.

Sixteen years later, however, this assumption has proven only half-true: Successive Israeli governments have committed explicitly to the goal of a Palestinian state, but the Palestinians have yet to abandon their demand for the demographic elimination of the Jewish one. It has thus become increasingly clear that the real problem is not the refugees, but Palestinian unwillingness to accept the very existence of a Jewish state. And since Israel will not agree to commit suicide, further talks will be pointless unless this unwillingness changes.

Yet the justice of making recognition a precondition for talks goes far deeper than that, as a Palestinian parallel ironically demonstrates. Prior to his speech last Sunday, Netanyahu had refused to commit to the goal of a Palestinian state. The Palestinians refused to resume negotiations unless he did, and the world, rightly, backed them. Essentially, the Palestinian position was "we will not agree to negotiate about whether we have a right to exist; we are only prepared to discuss the details." But the Jewish state is also not prepared to negotiate about whether it has a right to exist. It, too, is only prepared to discuss the details: borders, water rights, compensating the refugees, etc. And despite its initial belief in Palestinian good faith, it never should have allowed the "right of return" onto the table: No sane country would agree to make its very existence a subject of negotiations.

Netanyahu, however inconsistently, is belatedly trying to correct this fatal error, and he deserves the world's wholehearted support. And this is not merely because, practically speaking, no peace deal will be possible unless the Palestinians accept the Jewish state's existence.

Primarily, it is because the Jewish state cannot be the only state in the world whose very right to exist is subject to negotiations. And the Jewish people cannot be the only people in the world whose right to a nation-state of its own is deemed negotiable. (Jerusalem Post Jun 24)

Israelis, U.S. Jews Differ Dramatically On Obama By: Caroline Glick

Have American Jews abandoned Israel in favor of President Obama? This is a central question in the minds of Israelis today.

In a poll of Israeli Jews conducted in mid-June by the Jerusalem Post, a mere 6 percent of respondents said they view Obama as pro-Israel. In stark contrast, a Gallup tracking poll in early May showed that 79 percent of American Jews support the president.

These numbers seem to tell us that U.S. Jews have indeed parted company with the Jewish state.

No American president has ever been viewed as similarly ill disposed toward Israel by Israelis. With only 6 percent seeing the administration as friendly, it is apparent that distrust of Obama is not a partisan issue in Israel. It spans the spectrum from far left to right, from ultra-Orthodox to ultra-secular. But with his 79-percent approval rating among U.S. Jews, it is clear the American Jewish community is quite sympathetically inclined

toward Obama.

Appearances of course can be deceptive. And it is worth taking a closer look at the numbers to understand what they tell us about American Jewish sentiments regarding Obama and Israel. First, however, we should consider what it is about Obama that makes nearly all Israeli Jews view him as an adversary.

The Jerusalem Post poll showed a massive divergence between Israeli Jews and Obama on the issue of Jewish building beyond the 1949 armistice line. The Obama administration has refused to budge in its hard-line demand that Israel end all Jewish building in north, south, and east Jerusalem as well as in Judea and Samaria.

For its part, the Netanyahu government has refused to bow to this demand. Seventy percent of Israeli Jews support the Netanyahu government's handling of the issue with the Obama administration and 69 percent oppose a freeze on Jewish building.

Beyond Obama's agitation on the issue of Jewish construction, Israelis are dismayed by what they perceive as the generally hostile approach he has adopted in dealing with the Jewish state. This approach was nowhere more in evidence than in his speech to the Islamic world in Cairo on June 4.

It wasn't just Obama's comparison of Palestinian terrorism to the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, the American civil rights movement and antebellum slave rebellions that set people off. There was also Obama's inference that Israel owes its legitimacy to the Holocaust.

It is that claim - Obama repeated it during his visit to Buchenwald - which forms the basis of the Islamic narrative against Israel. It argues that Jews are not indigenous to the Middle East, and that the only thing keeping Israel in place is European guilt about Auschwitz. Not only do Israelis of all political stripes reject this as factually false, they recognize it is inherently anti-Semitic because it ignores and negates 3,500 years of Jewish history in the land of Israel.

With Israeli distrust of Obama so apparent, and so easily explained, two questions arise: How has Obama managed to maintain American Jewish support despite his unprecedented unpopularity in Israel? And what is the likelihood that when push comes to shove, American Jews will stand with Israel against the president they so admire?

Obama's great success in maintaining support among American Jews owes much to the fact that most American Jews do not pick up the same messages from Obama's statements as do Israeli Jews. Whereas Israeli Jews recognize that it is morally obscene, strategically suicidal and historically inaccurate to suggest that Israel has no rights to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and that Jews have no right to live there, American Jews do not intuitively understand this to be the case. Consequently, while Israeli Jews recognize Obama's calls for a total freeze in Jewish construction in these areas as inherently hostile, most American Jews do not.

Beyond this, for the past 15 years, Holocaust education - more so than Zionist education or Jewish religious education - has become the hallmark of American Jewish identity. As a consequence, American Jews may not see anything objectionable in Obama's inference that Israel owes its existence to the Holocaust.

If the divergence in U.S. Jewish and Israeli attitudes toward Obama is simply a consequence of a lack of American Jewish awareness of the significance of Obama's positions and policies for Israel, then the disparity in views can be easily remedied by a sustained issues awareness campaign by Israel and by American Jewish organizations. For many of Israel's core American Jewish supporters, such a campaign would no doubt go a long way in energizing them to challenge the administration on its positions vis-à-vis Israel.

But there are other factors at work. According to the American Jewish Committee's 2008 survey of American Jews, some 67 percent of American Jews feel close to Israel. These numbers, while high, are not significantly higher than similar support levels among the general U.S. population. (A survey of general American sentiment toward Israel conducted this month by the Israel Project shows that support for Israel has dropped by 20 percent in the past nine months - from 69 to 49 percent. Presumably, Jewish American support for Israel has also experienced a drop.)

More significantly, the AJC survey showed that in the lead-up to the 2008 presidential elections, only three percent of American Jews said a candidate's position on Israel was the most important issue for them. Indeed, according to survey after survey of American Jewish opinion over the past decade, U.S. Jewish support for Israel, while widespread, is not particularly deep. This sentiment lends to the conclusion that American

Jews will not abandon or temper their support for Obama simply because he is perceived as being hostile to Israel.

The picture, then, is a mixed bag. Support for Israel against Obama will likely rise as a consequence of a sustained educational campaign among American Jews about the issues in dispute and their importance for Israel's security and national well-being. But even in that event, it is unclear how dramatic the shift would be. Given the shallowness of U.S. Jewish support for Israel, no doubt many American Jews will not care enough to reassess their positions on either Israel or Obama.

The one bit of encouraging news in all this is the persistence of support for Israel relative to Palestinians among rank and file Americans. Palestinians are supported by a mere five percent of Americans.

No doubt it is this disparity that is motivating leading Democratic politicians - most recently Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Democratic Senator Robert Menendez from New Jersey - to publicly distance themselves from the administration's Mideast policies.

If U.S. Jewish leaders and pro-Israel activists can educate just a fraction of the American Jewish community, and motivate them to stand with Israel in a significant way against administration pressure, this will likely motivate still more lawmakers and politicians from both parties to maintain support for Israel against the administration. Certainly it will help convince Israelis we haven't been abandoned by American Jewry. And that in itself would be no mean achievement. (Jewish Press Jun 24)

Persian and Israeli Courage By Thomas J. Mattingly

On Sunday, one week ago, Israel National Radio host Tamar Yonah showed remarkable political and journalistic courage by interviewing independent and popular Iranian TV political commentator Saeed Behbahani. They discussed Iran's presidential election rigging and the renewed possibility for a new revolution and regime change in Iran (by and for the people of Iran).

Unlike what we see, hear, and read in the mainstream media, Tamar's interview shows that the people of Israel and the people of Iran may still be long-term friends and allies. In addition, the needs and wants of the people of Iran and the people of Israel may be somewhat similar. Both Israelis and Persians need the freedom to live in peace without threats from hostile neighbors.

Seventy-five percent or more of the people of Iran (Muslim and non-Muslim) want a new, independent, non-Islamic form of government - with individual, tribal, and provincial autonomies (i.e., true regime change).

Saeed Behbahani was born into a science-oriented, Muslim political family in Iran in 1954 - one year after British and Americans helped to overthrow the elected government of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq in a coup d'etat and installed the pro-West government of the Shah of Iran.

In the mid-1970s, the Shah's secret police arrested Mr. Behbahani for political opposition to the Shah's government. After the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran in 1979 (with still-continuing British and American help, Behbahani and most Iranian intellectuals say), Khomeini's secret police arrested Behbahani for political opposition to Khomeini's government in Iran.

In 2005, during boycotted elections that first selected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Behbahani was arrested in America while videotaping an empty Iranian election-polling place in a mosque near Washington. Although numerous Iranian Muslims assaulted Behbahani, the Bush Administration labeled Behbahani as a "terrorist" and had him arrested by the local police. The numerous Muslims who assaulted Behbahani (and broke his camera) were not arrested or prosecuted. I met Behbahani when he came to me for legal help. Behbahani was later acquitted of all charges.

Saeed Behbahani and 75 percent of the people of Iran favor a new revolution and regime change in Iran (by and for the people of Iran). The Obama Administration, the British and other Western leaders are not in favor of such regime change unless they help to pick the new Iranian leader.

Muslim Brotherhood-style political-religious leaders in Iran choose the candidates permitted to run for president. The people of Iran do not choose these presidential candidates. Although pro-nuclear Mir Hossein Mousavi (supported by nominally pro-West and definitely pro-Obama Iranian oligarch Rafsanjani) allegedly won the recent presidential election

in Iran, Mousavi is not the candidate of the people of Iran. Saeed Behbahani says this; and so do most people of Iran (if you listen closely).

"According to Saeed Behbahani of MihanTV, a US government emissary met in Dubai two weeks ago with Mehdi Khazali, campaign manager for Mir Hossein Mousavi, bringing assurances of US government support for his campaign," according to a June 10th report at www.Iran.org (website of Ken Timmerman's Foundation for Democracy in Iran). Mousavi is not the candidate of the people of Iran.

With Ahmadinejad again allegedly winning the election in Iran - but with credible allegations of massive vote fraud - Behbahani and many others say that a new revolution in Iran may occur soon. However, if new revolutionary regime change in Iran occurs now, then Rafsanjani and Mousavi may soon control an Iran with nuclear capabilities. If Mousavi becomes the front man for revolution and regime change in Iran, then the only real difference may be a smiley face on a nuclear-capable Iran.

If we support the people of Iran in their legitimate self-determination endeavors (which are not anti-Israel or anti-West), then the people of Iran, America and Israel may eliminate the threats that a terror-supporting, nuclear-capable Iran may pose to Israel, America and others - and to Iran. The people of Iran may be ready, willing, and able to carry out a new revolution and regime change in Iran - despite and due to soon-escalating government violence. Since Israel, America, and the West cannot lead this revolution, how should we support the people of Iran?

The writer resides and works in Washington, DC. He incorporated and co-founded A New Foundation for Iran Inc. (Israelnationalnews.com Jun 21)

Demilitarized Palestinian State? By Prof. Arieh Eldad MK

"I don't think there's a Palestinian nation. There's an Arab nation. I don't think there's a Palestinian nation. That's a colonial invention. Since when were there Palestinians? I think there's only an Arab nation. Until the end of the 19th century, Palestine was the southern part of Greater Syria."

If I had said this, I would undoubtedly be called a Jewish nationalist, a racist, and worst of all - detached from reality. Yet, note well, these words were spoken by former MK Dr. Azmi Bishara in an interview with Yaron London several years ago. Bishara is a leader of Israeli Arab citizens who openly identify with the enemy, and who was forced to flee Israel under suspicion of aiding Hizbullah in wartime.

When Benjamin Netanyahu delivered his Bar-Ilan speech, he could have used these words. He could have ripped the mask of deception from the terrible historical lie that we have taken to our hearts as if it were written on the Tablets of the Law given at Sinai. "Two States for Two Nations" has become holy dogma and anyone who challenges its validity is suspected of blasphemy.

But even if we assume that Netanyahu wished to speak in terms acceptable to Europe and the United States, rather than to fight a battle which he considered lost, still it would have been better had he not deceived his listeners with the scam known as "a demilitarized state."

When I heard the speech, my initial reaction was: "There ain't no such animal." Of course, I don't mean nano-states such as Andorra or the Vatican, which have themselves chosen not to maintain an army. There is no real state in the world defined as a demilitarized state. And Netanyahu did not make do with a misleading general statement, he went into details: the state won't have missiles and rockets and planes, and will not be able to sign treaties.

The more I listened to this and said to myself that there is no such thing, I was reminded of something quite bothersome. Was there once such a state? And then one of my friends reminded me there had been.

"It will be forbidden to Germany to maintain or build fortifications... in this territory (West of the Rhine)... It is forbidden for Germany to maintain an army.... the German army will not include more than seven infantry divisions.... It is forbidden for Germany to import or export tanks or any other military hardware.... The German naval forces will be limited and are not to include submarines. The armed forces of Germany will not include any air forces.... In the political realm, Germany is forbidden to enter into any treaty with Austria."

So it was written and sealed in the Treaty of Versailles. The treaty was signed on June 28, 1919, as part of the Paris Peace Conference following the First World War. Essentially, Germany became a demilitarized state and was also limited from a political perspective.

So what happened? Did the "demilitarized" status prevent the Second World War and, worst of all, the destruction of European Jewry?

By 1922, an agreement between Russia and Germany had been signed in the Italian city of Rapallo. The agreement was open and met the terms of the Versailles Treaty, but the conference that prepared it was secret; and there, Soviet Russia and Germany agreed on joint establishment of weapons factories, poison gas and ammunition. German army officers were sent to Russia to be trained in the use of weapons that were forbidden to be maintained in Germany. In Germany, civilian factories were refurbished into arms factories, funded, as it were, by private individuals, not the state.

When I heard about the widespread activity of Jews in the Obama court and about the extreme anti-Israeli stance they are taking, and about the anger of the extreme Left in Israel over Netanyahu's speech - in that he did not express a willingness to take in Arab refugees, give away Jerusalem and dismantle settlements, all as a prepayment for negotiating with the enemies of Israel - I again thought of the Rapallo Treaty. It was the Jewish foreign minister of Germany, Walther Rathenau, who stood behind the agreement that years later gave Nazi Germany its powerful war machine. And it was Erhard Milch, the son of a Jewish father, who subverted the Versailles Treaty and, in the guise of civilian aeronautic companies and flying clubs, established Lufthansa, which during the war became the Luftwaffe, the German air force that in weeks overcame Poland and France and bombed London in the Blitz. The Jewish people can be trusted to bring forth warped members who will arm the "demilitarized Palestinian state", if one should ever come to be.

The lesson being that there is no political power that can prevent a sovereign state from doing whatever it wants. Netanyahu knows that if ever a Palestinian state should, Heaven forbid, be established, Israel will not be able to declare war on it if it should choose, for instance, to sign an international tourism agreement with Cyprus or a transfer-of-technology agreement with Iran. If pipes are manufactured in Tulkarm, Israel will not be able to start a war that can be justified in the eyes of the world if steel cutters turn the pipes into Kassam rockets. Since nothing other than Israeli force could possibly preserve demilitarization, Netanyahu is deceiving the people of Israel and promising them something that cannot be delivered.

But all of the above is not the main thing. The main thing is that Netanyahu has recognized the right of Arabs to establish a sovereign state in our homeland. None of his conditions and reservations can hide this abomination. Whoever recognizes the right of his enemy to establish a state in his homeland has abandoned all principle and all that is left to do is argue over the price. Whoever has left his religion and changed his faith cannot insist on observing the commandments of what is no longer his faith. Whoever has abandoned his patrimony has no basis on which to insist on continuing to build on its lands. (Israelnationalnews.com Jun 24)

The Obama Effect By Caroline Glick

"Could there be something to all the talk of an Obama effect, after all? A stealth effect, perhaps?" So asked Helene Cooper, the New York Times' diplomatic correspondent in a news analysis of the massive anti-regime protests in Iran published in Sunday's Times.

It took US President Barack Obama eight days to issue a clear statement of support for the millions of pro-freedom demonstrators throughout Iran risking their lives to oppose the tyranny of the mullahs. And after eight days of vacillating and hedging his bets and so effectively supporting Iranian dictator Ali Khamenei against the multitudes rallying in the streets, Obama's much awaited statement was not particularly forceful.

He offered no American support of any kind for the protesters. Indeed, it is hard to say that in making his statement, the American president was speaking primarily as an American.

He warned the likes of Khamenei and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose goons are currently under orders to beat, arrest and murder protesters, that "the world is watching... If the Iranian government seeks the respect of the international community, it must respect the dignity of its own people and govern through consent, not coercion."

According to several prominent Western bloggers with direct ties to the protesters, Obama's statement left the Iranians underwhelmed and angry.

But as Cooper sees it, the protesters owe their ability to oppose the regime that just stole their votes and has trampled their basic human rights

for 30 years to Obama and the so-called "Obama effect." Offering no evidence for her thesis, and ignoring a public record filled with evidence to the contrary, Cooper claims that it is due to Obama's willingness to accept the legitimacy of Iran's clerical tyranny that the protesters feel emboldened to oppose their regime. If it hadn't been for Obama, and his embrace of appeasement as his central guiding principle for contending with the likes of Khamenei and Ahmadinejad, as far as Cooper is concerned, the people on the streets would never have come out to protest.

By this thinking, America is so despised by the Iranians that the only way they will make a move against their regime is if they believe that America is allied with their regime. So by this line of reasoning, the only way the US can lead is by negative example - which the world in its wisdom will reject.

While Cooper's analysis gives no evidence that Obama's policies toward the ayatollahs had any impact on the tumultuous events now sweeping through Iran, it does make clear that the so-called Obama effect is a real phenomenon. It just isn't the phenomenon she claims it is.

THE REAL OBAMA effect on world affairs relates to the US media's unprecedented willingness to abandon the basic responsibilities of a free press in favor of acting as propagandists for the president. From Cooper - who pretends that Obama's unreciprocated open hand to the mullahs is what empowered the protesters - to Newsweek editor Evan Thomas who referred to Obama earlier this month as a "sort of God," without a hint of irony, the US media have mobilized to serve the needs of the president.

It is hard to think of an example in US history in which the media organs of the world's most important democracy so openly sacrificed the most basic responsibilities of news gatherers to act as shills for the chief executive. Franklin Delano Roosevelt enjoyed adoring media attention, but he also faced media pressures that compelled him to take actions he did not favor. The same was the case with John F. Kennedy.

Today the mainstream US media exert no such pressures on Obama. Earlier this month NBC's nightly news anchorman Brian Williams bowed to Obama when he bade him good night at the White House.

On Wednesday ABC News will devote an entire day of programming to advancing Obama's controversial plan to nationalize health care. Its two prime time news shows will be broadcast from White House. Good Morning America will feature an interview with Obama, and ABC's other three flagship shows will dedicate special programming to his health care reform program.

On the other hand, ABC has refused Republican requests for a right of reply to Obama's positions. The network has also refused to sell commercial advertising time to Republicans and other Obama opponents to offer their dissenting opinions to his plans.

This media behavior has been noted by the likes of Fox News and the handful of other US news outlets that are not in the tank for Obama. But the repercussions of the Obama effect on US politics and world affairs have been largely ignored.

The most important repercussion of the US media's propagandistic reporting is that the American public is denied the ability to understand events as they unfold. Take for instance The New York Times*' write-up of Khamenei's sermon this past Friday in which he effectively declared war on the protesters. As Russell Berman pointed out in the Telos blog on Saturday, the Times' write-up was misleadingly selective.

The Times did not mention that Khamenei ascribed world events to a Zionist conspiracy which he believes controls the US. It similarly failed to mention his long rant against the US for the FBI's 1993 raid on David Koresh's Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas.

Had the Times - and other major media outlets - properly reported Khamenei's speech, they would have made clear to their readers that he is not a rational thinker. His view of world events is deeply distorted by his hatreds and prejudices and paranoia.

But then, if Times readers were permitted to know just how demented Khamenei's views of the world are, they might come to the conclusion that Obama's intense desire to sit down with him, and his constant pandering to Iran's "supreme leader" are ill-advised and counterproductive. They might come to the conclusion that it is impossible to achieve a meeting of the minds with a man who calls Americans "morons" and leads his subordinate government officials in chants of "Death to America," "Death to Britain" and "Death to Israel."

And if they came to these conclusions, how could Obama be expected to affect anything?

Sunday, Cooper argued that Obama has changed the course of history in Iran simply by being the US president. In her words, unnamed Obama supporters claim that "the mere election of Barack Obama in the United States had galvanized reformers in Iran to demand change."

And Obama's power as president to change the world is not limited to Iran. As far as his media servants are concerned, his "mere election" is responsible for everything positive that has occurred in the US and throughout the world since last November.

Take Hizbullah's defeat in the Lebanese parliamentary elections two weeks ago. As far as the US media are concerned, it was Obama's speech to the Muslim world on June 4 that emboldened the Lebanese to back the anti-Syrian March 14 slate of candidates. Never mind that his speech - which refused to condemn Iran for its support for terrorism and its nuclear weapons program - actually strengthened Hizbullah's position by demonstrating that the US would take no action against its Iranian masters. As far as the US media were concerned, Obama won the election for Hizbullah's pro-Western rivals.

Yet this is not true. According to actual electoral data, what swung the balance towards Saad Hariri's March 14 camp was Hizbullah-allied Christian leader Michel Aoun's failure to convince Lebanon's Christian minority to acquiesce to Hizbullah's takeover of the country. And Lebanese Christian voters did not reject Hizbullah because Obama is President of the United States. They rejected Hizbullah because the Maronite Christian Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir warned them on the eve of the election, "We must be alert to the schemes being plotted for us and thwart the intense efforts which, if they succeed, will change the face of our country."

WHILE OBAMA'S supporters in the US media are certain that Obama's "mere election" is responsible for every positive development on the world scene, they are equally certain that he bears no responsibility for the negative developments that have happened so far on his watch.

For instance, the fact that North Korea chose to escalate its nuclear brinkmanship shortly after Obama took office with a promise of appeasing Pyongyang is considered irrelevant. The fact that he ordered deep cuts in the US missile defense budget as North Korea tested a long-range missile and a nuclear bomb, and that he has maintained these cuts despite North Korea's announced plan to launch a missile against the US on July 4 has gone largely unreported.

Furthermore, the US media were quick to celebrate the UN Security Council's recent resolution against North Korea which calls for inspections of suspicious North Korean ships travelling in international waters as a great Obama achievement. But they failed to inform the public that the resolution has no enforcement mechanism. Consequently, today the USS John McCain, which is tracking a North Korean ship suspected of carrying ballistic missiles, lacks the authority to interdict it and inspect the cargo.

OUR WORLD today is complex and fraught with dangers. Some of these dangers are new, and some are old. All require serious discussion.

In free societies, the media's primary responsibilities are to report current events to the public, place those events into an historical context to enable the public to understand how and why they occurred, and to present the public with the options for going forward. It is due to the media's historic role in maintaining and cultivating an informed discussion and debate about current affairs that they became known as democracy's watchdog. When media organs fail to fulfill their basic responsibilities, they degenerate quickly into democracy's undertaker. For an uninformed public is incapable of making the sorts of decisions required of free citizens.

Obama and his media flacks would have us believe that by speaking of American values and by distinguishing friend from foe, former president George W. Bush raised the hackles of the world against America. Perhaps there is some truth to this assertion. Perhaps there isn't.

What they fail to consider is that by genuflecting to tyrants, Obama has made the US an international laughingstock. Far from sharing their adulation of Obama and his cool demeanor, most of the nations of the world believe that the US has abandoned its leadership role. And unlike the US media, they realize that America has no understudy.

Unfortunately, unless the Obama effect wears off soon, by the time the American people become aware of this fact it may be too late to make a difference. (Jerusalem Post Jun 22)