

Obama Administration's Reckless Change in Policy Towards Israel

A Compilation of Recent Articles

March 2010

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea follows these articles.

The following articles from the Wall Street Journal are over a week old. However, they do a terrific job of showcasing the historical mindset of the United States concerning our relationship with the State of Israel and the Middle East as a whole. They also show how quickly and drastically things are changing under the Obama administration.

Obama's Turn Against Israel

The U.S. makes a diplomatic crisis out of a blunder.

The Wall Street Journal

March 15, 2010

In recent weeks, the Obama Administration has endorsed "healthy relations" between Iran and Syria, mildly rebuked Syrian President Bashar Assad for accusing the U.S. of "colonialism," and publicly apologized to Moammar Gadhafi for treating him with less than appropriate deference after the Libyan called for "a jihad" against Switzerland.

When it comes to Israel, however, the Administration has no trouble rising to a high pitch of public indignation. On a visit to Israel last week, Vice President Joe Biden condemned an announcement by a mid-level Israeli official that the government had approved a planning stage—the fourth out of seven required—for the construction of 1,600 housing units in north Jerusalem. Assuming final approval, no ground will be broken on the project for at least three years.

But neither that nor repeated apologies from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prevented Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—at what White House sources ostentatiously said was the personal direction of President Obama—from calling the announcement "an insult to the United States." White House political chief David Axelrod got in his licks on NBC's Meet the Press yesterday, lambasting Israel for what he described as "an affront."

Since nobody is defending the Israeli announcement, least of all an obviously embarrassed Israeli government, it's difficult to see why the Administration has chosen this occasion to spark a full-blown diplomatic crisis with its most reliable Middle Eastern ally. Mr. Biden's visit was intended to reassure Israelis that the Administration remained fully committed to Israeli security and legitimacy. In a speech at Tel Aviv University two days after the Israeli announcement, Mr. Biden publicly thanked Mr. Netanyahu for "putting in place a process to prevent the recurrence" of similar incidents.

The subsequent escalation by Mrs. Clinton was clearly intended as a highly public rebuke to the Israelis, but its political and strategic logic is puzzling. The U.S. needs Israel's acquiescence in the Obama Administration's increasingly drawn-out efforts to halt Iran's nuclear bid through diplomacy or sanctions. But Israel's restraint is measured in direct proportion to its sense that U.S. security guarantees are good. If Israel senses that the Administration is looking for any pretext to blow up relations, it will care much less how the U.S. might react to a military strike on Iran.

As for the West Bank settlements, it is increasingly difficult to argue that their existence is the key obstacle to a

peace deal with the Palestinians. Israel withdrew all of its settlements from Gaza in 2005, only to see the Strip transform itself into a Hamas statelet and a base for continuous rocket fire against Israeli civilians.

Israeli anxieties about America's role as an honest broker in any diplomacy won't be assuaged by the Administration's neuralgia over this particular housing project, which falls within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries and can only be described as a "settlement" in the maximalist terms defined by the Palestinians. Any realistic peace deal will have to include a readjustment of the 1967 borders and an exchange of territory, a point formally recognized by the Bush Administration prior to Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. If the Obama Administration opts to transform itself, as the Europeans have, into another set of lawyers for the Palestinians, it will find Israeli concessions increasingly hard to come by.

That may be the preferred outcome for Israel's enemies, both in the Arab world and the West, since it allows them to paint Israel as the intransigent party standing in the way of "peace." Why an Administration that repeatedly avers its friendship with Israel would want that is another question.

Then again, this episode does fit Mr. Obama's foreign policy pattern to date: Our enemies get courted; our friends get the squeeze. It has happened to Poland, the Czech Republic, Honduras and Colombia. Now it's Israel's turn.

The Settlements Aren't the Problem

By Bret Stephens, *Wall Street Journal*

March 16, 2010

I once got an angry letter from Baruch Goldstein's father. Goldstein, remember, was an Israeli settler who in 1994 entered the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and gunned down 29 Muslim worshippers. A decade later, I wrote a column for the *Jerusalem Post* in which I described Goldstein as personifying Israel's lunatic extreme. The father insisted that his son deserved to be celebrated as a hero. Indeed, his grave site was transformed into a shrine until the Israeli army eventually tore it down.

It's easy to dislike Israel's settlements, and still easier to dislike many of the settlers. Whatever your view about the legality or justice of the enterprise, it takes a certain cast of mind to move your children to places where they are more likely to be in harm's way. In the current issue of the *American Interest*, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer persuasively spells out the many ways in which the settlement movement has undermined Israel's own rule of law, and hence its democracy. And as last week's diplomatic eruption over the prospective construction of 1,600 housing units in municipal Jerusalem shows, the settlements are a constant irritant to the United States, one friend Israel can't afford to lose.

So it would be a splendid thing for Israel to tear down its settlements, put the settlers behind its pre-1967 borders and finally reach the peace deal with the Palestinians that has been so elusive for so long.

Except for one problem: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict isn't territorial. It's existential. Israelis are now broadly prepared to live with a Palestinian state along their borders. Palestinians are not yet willing to live with a Jewish state along theirs.

That should help explain why it is that in the past decade, two Israeli prime ministers—Ehud Barak in 2000 and Ehud Olmert in 2008—have put forward comprehensive peace offers to the Palestinians, and have twice been rebuffed. In both cases, the offers included the division of Jerusalem; in the latter case, it also included international jurisdiction over Jerusalem's holy places and concessions on the subject of Palestinian refugees. Current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also offered direct peace talks. The Palestinians have countered by withdrawing to "proximity talks" mediated by the U.S.

It also helps explain other aspects of Palestinian behavior. For Hamas, Tel Aviv is no less a “settlement” than the most makeshift Jewish outpost on the West Bank. The supposedly moderate Fatah party has joined that bandwagon, too: Last year, Mohammed Dahlan, one of Fatah’s key leaders, said the party was “not bound” by the 1993 Oslo Accords through which the PLO recognized Israel.

Then there is the test case of Gaza. When Israel withdrew all of its settlements from the Strip in 2005, it was supposed to be an opportunity for Palestinians to demonstrate what they would do with a state if they got one. Instead, they quickly turned it into an Iranian-backed Hamas enclave that for nearly three years launched nonstop rocket and mortar barrages against Israeli civilians. Israel was ultimately able to contain that violence, but only at the price of a military campaign that was vehemently denounced by the very people who had urged Israel to withdraw in the first place.

As it happens, I supported Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza, bloody-minded neocon though I am. On balance, I still think it was the right thing to do. By 2005, Israel’s settlements in the Strip had become military and political liabilities. But there is a duty to take account of subsequent developments. And the sad fact is that the most important thing Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza accomplished was to expose the fanatical irredentism that still lies at the heart of the Palestinian movement.

The withdrawal exposed other things too. For years, Israel’s soi-disant friends, particularly in Europe, had piously insisted that they supported Israel’s right to self-defense against attacks on Israel proper. But none of them lifted a finger to object to the rocket attacks from Gaza, while they were outspoken in denouncing Israel’s “disproportionate” use of retaliatory force.

Similarly, Israel withdrew from Gaza with assurances from the Bush administration that the U.S. would not insist on a return to the 1967 borders in brokering any future deal with the Palestinians. But Hillary Clinton reneged on that commitment last year, and now the administration is going out of its way to provoke a diplomatic crisis with Israel over a construction project that—assuming it ever gets off the ground—is plainly in keeping with past U.S. undertakings.

In the past decade, Israelis have learned that neither Palestinians nor Europeans can be taken at their word. That’s a lesson they may soon begin to draw about the U.S. as well. Which is a pity for many reasons—not least because it gives the settler movement every excuse it needs to keep rolling right along.

Israel and The Crisis With Obama

By: John Bolton, Wall Street Journal
March 17, 2010

Benjamin Netanyahu's first term as Israeli prime minister collapsed in 1999 in part because he had an unhappy relationship with President Bill Clinton. It is understandable then that Mr. Netanyahu's current government had, until last week, strived to stay close to President Barack Obama.

That strategy would have been entirely sensible if Mr. Obama were simply another president in the long line since Franklin Roosevelt who vigorously asserted U.S. national interests, championed our friends (especially beleaguered ones), and kept alliances strong. But Mr. Obama is different. He is our first post-American president. He looks beyond American exceptionalism and believes that our role on the world stage should be merely one nation among many. Mr. Netanyahu's strategy is therefore out-of-date and flawed.

Israel has sought to accommodate Mr. Obama on two critical issues: negotiations with Palestinians and Iranian nuclear weapons. These efforts have largely kept bilateral disagreements out of sight. But now the suppressed conflicts are fully visible and will either be resolved or cause a serious collision between Israel and the U.S.

On the Palestinian front, Mr. Netanyahu's government has tolerated 14 months of feckless administration diplomacy that has not altered geopolitical realities between Israel and the Palestinians.

Last week's announcement of the construction of new settlements in East Jerusalem while Vice President Joe Biden was visiting Israel was an unnecessary step. But optics are not the real problem. Mr. Biden's response ("I condemn the decision"), approved in advance by Mr. Obama, and then emphasized by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a blistering Friday phone call to Mr. Netanyahu, foreshadows what lies ahead. It won't be pretty. Mr. Netanyahu's efforts to avoid open disputes with Washington have not won him White House plaudits. Mr. Obama almost certainly believes the real obstacle to peace is not new housing or unfortunate timing but so-called Israeli intransigence.

On Iran, Mr. Netanyahu has faithfully supported Mr. Obama's diplomacy, hoping to build credibility with the president against the day when Israel might have to strike Iran's weapons program pre-emptively. Jerusalem, for example, currently backs U.S. efforts to increase sanctions against Iran's nuclear program, doomed to failure though they are. As time passes, Israel's military option grows more difficult and the chances for success shrink as Iran seeks new air-defense systems and further buries and hardens nuclear facilities.

Mr. Netanyahu's mistake has been to assume that Mr. Obama basically agrees that we must prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. But the White House likely believes that a nuclear Iran, though undesirable, can be contained and will therefore not support using military force to thwart Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

What's more, Mr. Obama is also unwilling to let anyone else, namely Israel, act instead. That means that if Israel bombs Iranian nuclear facilities, the president will likely withhold critical replenishments of destroyed Israeli aircraft and other weapons systems.

We are moving inexorably toward, and perhaps have now reached, an Israeli crisis with Mr. Obama. Americans must realize that allowing Iran to obtain nuclear weapons is empowering an existential threat to the Israeli state, to Arab governments in the region that are friendly to the U.S., and to long-term global peace and security.

Mr. Netanyahu must realize he has not been banking good behavior credits with Mr. Obama but simply postponing an inevitable confrontation. The prime minister should recalibrate his approach, and soon. Israel's deference on Palestinian issues will not help it with Mr. Obama after a pre-emptive strike against Iran's nuclear program. It would be a mistake to think that further delays in such a strike will materially change the toxic political response Israel can expect from the White House. Israel's support will come from Congress and the American people, as opinion polls show, not from the president.

Mr. Obama is not merely heedless of America's predominant global position. He is also embarrassed enough by it not to regret diminishing it. In fact, we have achieved pre-eminence not simply to preen our American ego, but to defend our interests and those of like-minded allies. Ceding America's role in world affairs is not an act of becoming modesty but a dangerous signal of weakness to friends and adversaries alike. Israel may be the first ally to feel the pain.

How About an Arab "Settlement" Freeze?

By Ruth R. Wisse
March 18, 2010

When she is surrounded by a swirl of conversation she cannot understand, my two-year-old granddaughter turns to me expectantly: "What they talking about, Bubbe?" Right now, I would have to confess to her that the hubbub over 1,600 new housing units in Jerusalem defies rational explanation.

Of the children of Abraham, the descendants of Ishmael currently occupy at least 800 times more land than descendants of Isaac. The 21 states of the Arab League routinely announce plans of building expansion. Saudi Arabia estimates that 555,000 housing units were built over the past several years. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announced during a meeting in Baghdad last year that "Some 10,000 units will be built in each province [of Iraq] with 100 square meters per unit" to accommodate citizens whose housing needs have not been met for a long time. Egypt has established 10 new cities since 1996. They are Tenth of Ramadan, Sixth of October, Al Sadat, Al Shuruq, Al Obour, New Damietta, New Beni Sueif, New Assiut, New Luxor, and New Cairo.

In 2006 the Syrian Prime Minister, Mohammad Naji Atri, announced a new five-year development plan that aims to supply 687,000 housing units. Kuwait expects to have a demand for approximately 100,000 private housing units by 2010. Last year Jordan's King Abdullah launched a National Housing Initiative, which aims to build 120,000 properties for low-income Jordanians.

Arab populations grow. And neighborhoods expand to house them. What's more, Arab countries benefited disproportionately from the exchange of populations between Jews and Arabs that resulted from the Arab wars against Israel. Since 1948 upward of 800,000 Jews abandoned their homes and forfeited their goods in Egypt, Iraq, Morocco and Yemen. In addition to assets valued at hundreds of billions of dollars, the property deeds of Jews from Arab lands is estimated at a total area of 100,000 square miles, which is five times the size of the state of Israel, and more than Israel would include even if it were to stretch over all the disputed territories of the West Bank.

These preposterous disparities are a result of contrasting political cultures. The Arab League was founded at the same time as Israel with the express aim of undoing the Jewish state's existence. Although much has changed over the ensuing decades, opposition to the Jewish state remains the strongest unifying tool of inter-Arab and Arab-Muslim politics. Trying to eliminate the Jews rather than compete with them has never benefited nations.

It is unfortunate that Arabs obsess about building in Israel rather than aiming for the development of their own superabundant lands. But why should America encourage their hegemonic ambitions? In December the White House issued a statement opposing "new construction in East Jerusalem" without delineating where or what East Jerusalem is.

Ramat Shlomo, the neighborhood at the center of the present altercation, is actually in northern Jerusalem, west of the Jewish neighborhoods of Ramot, home to 40,000 Jewish residents. Why does the White House take issue with the construction of housing for Jewish citizens within the boundaries of their own country? The same White House raised no objection when Jordan recently began systematically stripping citizenship from thousands of its Palestinian citizens rather than providing new housing units for them in a land much larger than Israel.

Perhaps Israel has been at fault for not doggedly insisting on unconditional acceptance of its sovereign existence, and for not demanding that Arab rulers adhere to the U.N. Charter's guarantee of "equal rights of . . . nations large and small." Preposterous as they would have thought it, perhaps Israelis ought to have called for a freeze on Arab settlements to correspond to unreasonable Arab demands on them.

Any peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict will begin with a hard look at the map of the region in which 21 countries with 800 times more land are consumed with their Jewish neighbors' natural increase.

Ms. Wisse, a professor of Yiddish and comparative literature at Harvard, is the author of "Jews and Power" (Schocken, 2007).

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea:

God said to Abraham, "I [God] will bless those who bless you [Abraham], and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3 NKJ)

God then promised Abraham that this covenant of blessing and cursing would be passed down to Isaac and Jacob, not Ishmael.

*Genesis 17:19-22 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; **I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants** [the Jews] after him. "And as for Ishmael [father of the Arab people], I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. "**But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.**" (NKJ)*

God has demonstrated many times through the centuries His ability to keep His covenant promise of Genesis Chapter 12 to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Those who have attempted to curse and destroy the Jews have found themselves cursed. Now it appears that Mr. Obama and his administration want to steer the American ship into the "curse Israel" coral reef. The results are predictable based on the graveyard of rusting ships sitting on the bottom.

Some may assume Obama is doing so because he is ignorant of history and/or the promised curse for turning against God's witness people, the Jews. Others wonder if maybe this is just one of the many ways he is leading us deliberately into destruction. Is it possible that his communist, socialist, Muslim upbringing has created such contempt for America that he is doing everything he can to "CHANGE" it for the worse? It certainly appears that way. Unfortunately, there are 300,000,000 souls on this ship that is headed for a curse from God because of the Captain's foolishness or suicidal terrorist tendencies.

There is hope, though. The Jewish prophets told us it would be like this in the last days. They also told us that God was going to send a Messiah through the Jewish people who would forgive the sins of the humble and repentant sinner by taking their place in death on the cross. His name is Jesus. After a time of grace and mercy, Jesus is going to come again to set up His kingdom. Then all those who love His appearing will live under His rule forever with joy unspeakable. Have you humbled yourself yet? Time is getting short.