

# Obama's War on Israel

by Jerry Gordon and Ilana Freedman (April 2015)



When the polls closed in Israel on March 17, 2015 for election of a new government, Israel's Parliament, the Obama White House was poised for a result far different from the stunning victory of Prime Minister Netanyahu. His Likud Party list [won a plurality](#) of 30 seats, far ahead of his nearest rival, the Zionist Union, which secured only 24 seats. Although Israel's second leading party, led by Labor MK Yitzhak Herzog, had been in a tight lead in the exit polls, they failed to achieve the victory over Likud.

The election results turned up another surprise as the party that finished third in the polling was the Joint Arab List (JAL), which claimed 14 seats. JAL is led by charismatic Haifa lawyer and City Council member, [Ayman Oded](#) of Hadash, a far left party that includes the Israeli Communist Party and drew votes from leftist Jewish extremists groups like B'Tselem and Peace Now.

While exit polls showed the Zionist Union with a narrow one seat lead, the polls proved to be dead wrong. Many Israeli voters were angered by both the yellow journalism tactics of the major opposition Israeli media, Yediot Ahronoth and Israeli TV channels 2 and 10, and the leaks about the blatant interference by foreign groups allied with President Obama and leftist EU NGOs. Just weeks before the election, it was reported that these groups had spent huge amounts of money to defeat Netanyahu's party. But the large get-out-the-vote effort in the Israeli Arab community, which had been orchestrated by Obama's campaign organizers, failed to unseat the beleaguered Likud party. Centrist voters cast their votes for Netanyahu's party, and even the Israeli Bedouin communities voted overwhelmingly for Likud.

In the end, the vote was clearly a solid win for the Netanyahu camp. As a result, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, in accordance with Israeli election law, invited various party leaders to come for consultations to identify possible partners in a new ruling coalition. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, he gave the nod to Netanyahu, who had cobbled together a coalition majority of Knesset seats, 67 of which came from a right center-religious coalition of parties.

## The President Takes Revenge

President Obama's outrage at the election results was immediately apparent. At first, he

refused to follow the basic diplomatic custom of calling the newly re-elected Prime Minister to proffer his congratulations. Instead, he waited for several days, and when he finally did make the call, he scolded Netanyahu for his positions rather than congratulating him for his win. Not satisfied with lecturing Netanyahu on alleged racist remarks about Arab voters, he also berated the PM for his remarks rejecting a two-state solution, the centerpiece of Obama's "peace talks" between Israel and the Palestinians.

It is not altogether clear when the rift between Obama and Netanyahu began, but it certainly dates back to a series of diplomatic slights by the President during several visits by the Prime Minister to the White House.

Most recently, however, Netanyahu's address before a joint meeting of Congress fanned the flames of Obama's discontent. The purpose of Boehner's invitation had been to give Netanyahu the opportunity to present Israel's position on the danger posed to both Israel and the United States of a nuclear Iran to the members of Congress. This had been made necessary by the President's own secrecy, keeping Congress in the dark about the ongoing negotiations. But Obama saw the invitation – and Netanyahu's acceptance – as an affront to him personally, and rather than welcoming this as an opportunity to clarify the issues surrounding Iran's quest for nuclear development, he took the dysfunction between himself and Netanyahu to a new level.

In his speech, Netanyahu presented the possibility of a nuclear Iran as a security threat to the US, and an existential threat to Israel, calling the P+5 impending deal a "very bad deal," because it would allow Iran, a terrorist-supporting state, to become a threshold nuclear power. Obama, however, saw Netanyahu's speech as a challenge to his P5+1 initiative. The now highly politicized negotiations with Iran to lift international financial sanctions against its highly controversial nuclear program had become central to an out and out assault on Netanyahu and the upcoming elections in Israel.

Prior to the PM's speech, Obama showed his anger by making it clear that he would not "have time" to meet with Netanyahu while he was in Washington, claiming as well that it would give the appearance of interfering in Israel's upcoming elections on March 17.

In the end, and quite possibly because the President had made such a big issue over it, the Prime Minister gave his speech to a packed House. Ten times the number of people who crowded into the gallery had to be turned away for lack of seating. The speech received international coverage, carried live, complete and uninterrupted, on several international networks. Netanyahu was called "Churchillian" by more than one commentator.

The Prime Minister's speech was taken very seriously by many in Congress. Only days later,

Sen. Tom Cotton (AK-R) authored a letter, co-signed by 46 Senate Republican colleagues, and addressed to the Leaders of the Iranian Islamic Republic. Sent via Twitter, the letter explained the Constitutional requirements for Senatorial advice and consent on treaties and certain executive agreements.

The response to the letter by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei mocked America's "treachery." Foreign Minister Zarif's response went further, revealing that the Administration's strategy was to sideline Congressional review by seeking a UN Security resolution for the deal with Iran, since the agreement was multilateral. That contention roiled Obama's Congressional opponents even more. They warned the President not to sideline the US Congress in the Iranian negotiations.

Simultaneously, the bi-partisan US Senate Permanent Investigations Committee called for an investigation into possible violations of US funding laws by those involved in the effort to unseat Netanyahu in the Israeli elections. The alleged non-partisan "get-out-the-vote" campaigns by the Abraham Fund, One Voice, and the Israeli group, V-15, under the leadership of former Obama Campaign field director Jeremy Bird of 270 Strategies, was now coming under scrutiny in Washington.

The Administration responded to these actions by Congress with an unprecedented attack on Israel, involving allegations that Israel had spied on the Iran negotiations and had given classified information to members of Congress. Presidential aides demanded the end of a "50 year occupation" at a J Street Conference in Washington, suggesting that it would support Palestinian statehood.

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### **Israel Surrounded by Muslim States**

The Administration further expressed its anger in an unprecedented move by permitting the Pentagon to declassify and release a secret, 1987 report on Israel's nuclear program, despite a long-standing mutual agreement between the two allies to keep it secret. It was understood that to declassify the secret report would expose the Jewish nation's known but unrevealed nuclear weapons capabilities, making it vulnerable to further political attack. The release, which was occasioned by a Freedom of Information Act request by the virulently anti-Israel Institute for Research -Middle East Policy, only related to Israel's nuclear program. Those of other countries, contained in the report, were all redacted. The 386-page top-secret memo, titled, "[Critical Technological Assessment in Israel and NATO Nations](#)," goes into great detail about how Israel turned into a nuclear power in the 1970s and 80s.

Although the details of Israel's program may be, by now, dated, this unilateral action by the Obama Administration will no doubt bring renewed international pressure on Israel to become a signatory of the UN Non-Proliferation Treaty and be subject to intrusive UN IAEA inspections. A further consequence of the Administration's declassification of the secret report on Israel's nuclear program is it could provide a targeting file on possible attack scenarios in any retaliatory exchange with rogue nuclear states. This action is seen by many analysts as further evidence of the revenge campaign, unleashed by the Obama White House to further undermine Israel in the President's uncompromising push for an agreement with Iran.

Incredulous Americans are now increasingly concerned that the Administration wants to achieve a rapprochement with Iran, ending 36 years of isolation, while marginalizing our closest ally in the region. Even as the Administration continues to placate and appease Iran, its developing anti-Israel policy is taking firm root in the White House and State Department. By negotiating with terrorists, even as a crescendo of cries of "Death to America" are broadcast from the lips of the Ayatollah himself, Obama has created a new reality in the Middle East that is more likely to lead to war than to peace.

#### **Iran's Expanding Role in the Middle East**

One particularly dangerous aspect of the Obama Iran rapprochement is the latter's emerging hegemony over Arab States in Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Lebanon. The presence of its Quds Force commander, General Qassem Suleimani, in Iraq is particularly worrisome, as he orchestrates campaigns to wrest the city of Tikrit from ISIS, and further entrenches the Iranian presence there.

Following the collapse of the US-supported Yemeni government of President Hadi to a coalition of Shiite Houthi rebels supported by Iran, a new battleground has been created between Iran and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS, unfettered by a pro-West government and a US military presence, which was suddenly and shamefully removed on orders from Washington. The new fighting in Yemen triggered an almost immediate Saudi response. No longer waiting for a US initiative, Saudi Arabia began reinforcing its southern frontier with Yemen with troops and tanks, and deterring cross border assaults by Houthi fighters.

Obama's naive paradigm of a geo-political equilibrium between Shia Muslims led by Iran and Sunni Arabs led by Saudi Arabia foundered with the dramatic intervention by the Saudi Air Force on Wednesday March 25, 2015. Attacking Houthi rebels in northern Yemen, the capital, Sana'a and targets near Aden, the Saudi operation "determination storm" began, opening a new page in Middle East history.

The Saudis gave less than one hour notice to the Pentagon and the White House of the launch of the air campaign. The Administration wasn't consulted. That effrontery to the leader of the free world was in evidence at the 26<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Arab League in the Egyptian resort of Sharma El-Shaik. Abd-Rabbu Hadi, the ousted US-backed President of Yemen, who had fled from Aden to Saudi Arabia, [accused](#) the Houthi of being "stooges" for Iran. He refused any offer of a cease fire while the Saudis and Emirati air units continued attacking Houthi forces. Iran [warned](#) the Saudi and Emirate allies of "bloodshed," if attacks continue, but the Saudis mobilized 150,000 ground forces for possible action.

Secretary General of the Arab League Nabil Al-Araby [said](#) the Arab states would "join ranks and look into taking pre-emptive and defensive arrangements to maintain the Arab national security," and stressed the dire need for "necessary measures to counter them."

The Washington Post [reported](#) Arab leaders had effectively announced a "joint military force to intervene in neighboring states grappling with armed insurgencies."

All of us underestimated the Saudis. Now they have emerged at the top of a Sunni coalition against Iran—limited for the moment to the Houthi insurgency in Yemen, the most impressive piece of diplomacy in the Sunni world since Nasser, and perhaps in modern times. That attributes a lot of importance to a coalition assembled for a minor matter in a small country, but it may be the start of something important: the self-assertion of the Sunni world in response to the collapse of American regional power, the threat of Sunni jihadist insurgencies, and the Shi'ite bid for regional hegemony.

Obama's policy of leading from behind has clearly failed to stem the tide of radical Islamic extremists both Shiite and Sunni. Instead, Saudi Arabia has assumed leadership of its own coalition of at least ten Arab states to fight the menace of Iran-led Shia armies.

Against this background, the Obama administration has unleashed his deliberate attack against the only reliable ally in the Middle East, Israel. Surrounded by enemies, including Iranian proxies, Hezbollah, Hamas, Quds Force, and IRGC troops astride the Golan frontier with Syria, Israel faces the possibility of an imminent war greater than any in the past. Reports of ISIS units actively fighting Assad's forces in southern Syria, and suggestions that ISIS cells have now infiltrated Gaza, Sinai, and the PA in the West Bank only make the situation for Israel more tenuous and dangerous.

### **The Controversy and the American Jewish Community**

Late on the night of Israel's election returns, Charlie Rose of the eponymous PBS Show

convened a panel of leftists to comment on the Netanyahu victory. *The Charlie Rose* panel was composed of Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic*, [Ari Shavit](#) of *Ha'aretz*, Ronen Bergman Military Intelligence Columnist of Yedioth Ahronoth, [Yousef Munayyer](#) of the US Campaign against Palestine Occupation and Jerusalem Fund advocate for Anti-Israel BDS, and Lisa Goldman of the leftist +972 Magazine and Israel–Palestine Fellow of the New America Fund. The composition of Rose's panel was unbalanced, to say the least, but, it could be argued, reflected the strong opposition to Israel represented by the left.

Ronen suggested that only the international BDS (Boycott, Divest, Sanctions) campaign against Israel could change things by hitting Israelis in their back pockets, calling out Netanyahu as the virtual unbeatable "Caesar from Caesaria." Goldberg, who has virtually [unlimited interview](#) access to the Obama West Wing, predicted that a narrow right-wing government would fall in a year with new elections and that relations with the Obama administration will get even worse. Shavit bemoaned the progressive peacenik failure on the Left in Israel, Israel losing its soul, portending looming violence – a reference to a Third Intifada – and demographic problems ahead. Munayyer hewed to his usual pro-Palestinian anti-Israel stance calling it a tribal election. Goldman in her comments praised the Joint Arab List's third place showing in the Knesset elections as an important development for "Palestinian Israelis." [Watch](#) the Charlie Rose panel discussion.

Yossi Halevy of the Shalom Hartman Institute was the only voice of reality. He said, "Israelis believe that a Palestinian State may be both an existential solution and a threat, given the impasse over negotiations." Halevy conveyed the view that Israelis across the spectrum view an Obama consummation of an Iran nuclear deal as an existential threat. Halevy quoted left wing author David Grossman, saying that the Obama Administration on the Iran nuclear deal is "criminally naive and perilous for Israel."

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The Obama-led disputes have clearly divided the American Jewish community. Using the Soros-backed J Street, a strident, anti-Israel not-for-profit masquerading as a pro-Israel organization, as a vehicle for airing their anti-Israel rhetoric, the assault turned even more vitriolic. Today, Israel looks more like an enemy to the Obama West Wing than terror-supporting Iran.

The rabbinic leadership of Reform and Conservative Jewish denominations chastised the Netanyahu campaign for campaign remarks about "droves of Arab voters" being driven to the polls in a deliberate attempt to unseat him in programs funded by foreign interests. The

Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA), a leftist media outlet supported by Jewish Federation news outlets in America, [reported](#) how Rabbi Rick Jacobs, a close ally of J Street, condemned Netanyahu for his remarks, taken out of context, of why a Palestinian State was not a realistic prospect under current conditions with a corrupt PA led by President Mahmoud Abbas in a unity government with Hamas.

Not to be outdone, the Rabbinic Assembly of the Conservative Movement, whose leadership at the flagship Jewish Theological Seminary has been an active partner in Jewish Muslim dialogues with Muslim Brotherhood front groups, released a [statement](#) accusing Netanyahu of undermining “the principles upon which the State of Israel was founded.”

Further evidence of the American Jewish community divide over the Netanyahu election was reflected in a *Ha'aretz* [report](#) which quoted several American Reform rabbis who sharply criticized Netanyahu for remarks he had made at the end of his campaign.

Daniel Sokatch of the leftist organization the New Israel Fund, who had been taken to task by Netanyahu in campaign remarks, said in a statement issued by the group, “When the Prime Minister urged his base to come out and vote to counter ‘Arabs coming in droves to the ballot box,’ I knew, as you did, that this pandering to fear and prejudice could only exacerbate the divisions between Arab and Jewish citizens.” That the remarks had been taken out of context was ignored and painted a picture of Netanyahu as a bigot who was opposed to Arabs and peace.

In contrast to the liberal Jewish outrage, the ZOA’s Executive Director Mort Klein expressed solidarity with Netanyahu’s positions, saying, “I’m proud that the Israelis chose reality and security over fantasy and a phony hope in change.” Klein blamed the Palestinian Authority for “forcing” Netanyahu to make his video promise not to allow a Palestinian state because “they’ve aligned themselves with Nazi-like Hamas.” Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman of the Presidents of Major American Organizations, also cast his lot supporting Netanyahu and Israel. He said, “We know that politicians in the heat of campaigns in the U.S. and in Israel say things they may not mean to stick with in the long term. [Netanyahu] did not say that he gave up on the two-state solution, but rather that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas “does not appear ready to negotiate.”

*The Wall Street Journal* published a lead editorial with the title, [“Obama’s Israel Tantrum,”](#) suggesting that “the leader of the free world takes revenge on an ally.” “Even if you believe the main challenge in the region is getting Israel to cede more territory to the Palestinians, that day won’t happen until Israelis feel secure. But Israelis can be forgiven for feeling the opposite with a raging civil war in Syria, Islamic State and an offshoot of al Qaeda operating

near the Golan Heights, Iranian General Qassem Soleimani leading Shiite militias in Iraq, and a U.S. Administration sounding and acting as if Iran can be a more constructive partner for peace than Israel.” ([Read More](#))

Another *Wall Street Journal* [article](#), “Israel Spied on Iran Talks,” suggests that accusations of spying by Israel on American negotiations with Iran is yet another effort by the Obama Administration to isolate and blame Netanyahu for damaging the prospects for a P5+1 political agreement with Iran (an agreement that even the French criticize for not being “fool proof”). While senior US officials admit they knew about Israel shadowing the Iran talks, they were incensed when Israel took what information they acquired from various sources, including Iran and other P5+1 participants, to brief Congress on the realities of how bad a deal was emerging.

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It is clear that President Obama has unleashed revenge on Israel and PM Netanyahu, outraged that the Jewish nation would not succumb to his version of foreign policy and Israel’s need to comply with his wishes. He ignores Israel’s inherent obligation to assert its sovereign right to defend its people against the existential threats by Iran and its proxies, whose rising nuclear hegemony threatens the Middle East and the US.

America’s truculent president brooks no interference in his program. By attempting to marginalize Netanyahu’s legitimate objections to America’s rapprochement with Mahdist Iran, to US cooperation with Iran in the war against ISIS, and to concluding a political agreement that will enable Iran to achieve nuclear breakout, Obama has placed Israel in an untenable position.

As the Middle East continues to devolve into chaos, Israel remains the only stable democracy in the region. Israel’s future is tied closely to America’s. Often compared to “the canary in the coal mine,” any attack on Israel, which the Iranians call “the little Satan,” will be the precursor to a major attack on the US. That Obama refuses to acknowledge this, and continues to attack and threaten Israel, bodes ill for both countries.

It is not a stretch to say that as the chaos in the Muslim nations surrounding Israel continues to grow, America’s ability to withstand being drawn into another Middle East war will decrease exponentially. Only a strong and sound foreign policy that recognizes our true allies and our true enemies will enable the US to turn this escalating disaster around.

The next war will be more terrible than we can imagine. We cannot avoid it by ignoring the



warning signs all around us. Time is running out.

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Also see Jerry Gordon's collection of interviews,