

Obama Accuses Netanyahu of 'Orchestrating' A Campaign Against Him

by Hugh Fitzgerald



As is well known, the most anti-Israel of our Presidents is Jimmy Carter, the perennially grinning author of *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, which contains such tossed-off malevolence as this: "Some Israelis believe they have the right to confiscate and colonize Palestinian land and try to justify the sustained subjugation and persecution of increasingly hopeless and aggravated Palestinians." How little sympathy, how much venom, for the tiny Jewish state; how much nonsense and lies on behalf of the "Palestinians," whose land, Carter claimed, has been "confiscated" and "colonized" by those ruthless Israelis who have been responsible for the "sustained subjugation and persecution" of the "increasingly

hopeless" Palestinians.

A close second on the list of anti-Israel Presidents is Barack Obama. During his Administration, Israel found that Washington was determined to "reach out" to the Palestinians, insisting that the Jewish "settlements" in Judea and Samaria were an "obstacle to peace" and "violated international law." Apparently Obama and Secretary of State Kerry had no time to read the Mandate for Palestine, which clearly gives all of Judea and Samaria (a/k/a the West Bank) to the Jewish state. Nor did Obama have any intention of enforcing the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, that his own Vice President had once championed. Obama met with Mahmoud Abbas several times, in both Washington and in Ramallah, heaping praise on him like this:

And I have to commend President Abbas. He has been somebody who has consistently renounced violence, has consistently sought a diplomatic and peaceful solution that allows for two states, side by side, in peace and security; a state that allows for the dignity and sovereignty of the Palestinian people and a state that allows for Israelis to feel secure and at peace with their neighbors.

Abbas "consistently renounced violence"? He "consistently sought a diplomatic and peaceful solution"? The man who names schools and city squares after terrorists? The man who has provided hundreds of millions of dollars, as part of the Pay-For-Slay program, to terrorists and their families? The man who according to Obama "consistently sought a diplomatic solution" but walked away from Ehud Olmert's 2008 offer of almost the entire West Bank and shared control of the Old City?

That was how Obama saw Abbas. But if he had high praise for Abbas, Obama could scarcely conceal his disdain for Prime Minister Netanyahu. In May 2009, meeting Netanyahu at the

White House, Obama called for an end to settlement building, and throughout his two terms would continue to press for such a halt as the chief obstacle to arriving at the “two-state solution” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meanwhile, Obama’s Secretary of State, John Kerry, hammered out with his friend, the suave Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Sarif, an Iran Deal that was disastrous for the West and, especially, for Iran’s main target, Israel.

As a parting shot to Israel, a month before leaving office, Obama instructed his U.N. ambassador, Samantha Power, to abstain on U.N. Security Council resolution 2334 on 23 December 2016, a resolution that had 14 votes in support and only the US abstaining. The resolution was hideously unfair: it condemns Israel’s settlements on the West Bank as “a flagrant violation of international law”; demands that Israel “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem”; and reiterates the international consensus “in favor of a two-state solution to Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the 1967 lines” (that is, the scarcely defensible 1949 armistice lines that left Israel with a nine-mile-wide waist at Qalqilya). Never before had the United States failed to exercise its veto in the Security Council on behalf of Israel. By having the U.S. abstain, Obama ensured that U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334 would pass.

Obama could not stand Prime Minister Netanyahu, who had the maddening habit of standing up to him when he felt Obama’s policies endangered Israel. According to Obama Netanyahu “orchestrated” a campaign against him. This, and other charges made by Obama in his just-released book, *A Promised Land*, can be found here: “In New Memoir, Obama Accuses Netanyahu of Engaging in ‘Orchestrated’ Push Against His Administration,” [Algemeiner](#), November 13, 2020:

In his own words, former US President Barack Obama regarded Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a “smart, canny,

tough...gifted communicator” who engaged in an “orchestrated” push against his administration.

The disclosure is contained in Obama’s presidential memoir, A Promised Land, which will be published on Tuesday [Nov. 18]. In excerpts of the book released in advance, Obama wrote that Netanyahu’s “vision of himself as the chief defender of the Jewish people against calamity allowed him to justify almost anything that would keep him in power.”

On the subject of AIPAC, the US pro-Israel lobbying group, Obama claimed that its positions moved rightward in accordance with a political shift in Israel, “even when Israel took actions that were contrary to US policy.”

An ill-disguised charge of “dual loyalty” is being made about those Jewish AIPAC members who chose to support Israel rather than remain loyal to “US policy,” by which Obama meant his own policy. Thank god Israel’s American supporters were “contrary to US policy,” for that was a policy that supported the Muslim Brotherhood takeover of Egypt, provided Iran with \$100 billion in unfrozen assets with which it could support its network of proxies and allies, as it continued to build its Shi’a Crescent from the Gulf to the Mediterranean, and praised Mahmoud Abbas as a veritable prince of peace, while depicting Israel’s building of a handful of new settlements as the chief obstacle to an agreement between the Jewish state and the Palestinians.

He lamented that politicians who “criticized Israel policy too loudly risked being tagged as ‘anti-Israel’ (and possibly antisemitic) and [were] confronted with a well-funded opponent in the next election.”

Obama said that he was the subject of a “whisper campaign” that sought to portray him as “insufficiently supportive – or even hostile toward – Israel” during the 2008 presidential race.

Were those who warned that Obama would be “insufficiently supportive” of Israel not in fact, proven right? Didn’t American-Israeli relations reach a low point with Obama in the White House?

“On Election Day, I’d end up getting more than 70 percent of the Jewish vote, but as far as many AIPAC board members were concerned, I remained suspect, a man of divided loyalties; someone whose support for Israel, as one of [campaign manager David Axelrod’s] friends colorfully put it, wasn’t ‘felt in his kishkes’ – ‘guts,’ in Yiddish,” Obama wrote.

Obama also addressed his push for Israel to freeze settlement construction as part of his efforts to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Negotiations resumed briefly at the end of the 10-month freeze, which began in 2010, but Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas aborted them and the moratorium was not extended by Netanyahu.

In other words, Netanyahu – whom Obama portrays as an obstacle to peace – in fact accommodated the Americans by agreeing to a 10-month freeze on settlement building. The idea was to “build confidence” among the Palestinians who would then, Obama assumed, be willing to engage in negotiations. Abbas went through the motions of beginning such negotiations, but quickly aborted them. He had never had any intention of taking seriously those or any negotiations; he had already walked away from Ehud Olmert’s offer in 2008 of almost all of the West Bank, and shared control of Jerusalem’s Old City. Mahmoud Abbas had snookered Obama into pressuring Israel to freeze its settlement building for almost a whole year. Netanyahu complied, but nothing came of it save for a few months when Abbas feigned taking those negotiations seriously, before again walking away. Yet Obama managed to find fault for this fiasco not with Abbas, but with Netanyahu.

The ex-US president said it was “reasonable” to ask Israel to

take such a step [halting all settlement activity] , as it was the “stronger party.” However, “as expected, “Netanyahu’s reaction was “sharply negative” and Obama noted his administration came under pressure from the premier’s American allies.

Obama’s logic escapes me. Should the United States, as the “stronger party,” therefore yield to the demands of its antagonists, such as Iran or North Korea or Turkey, in any contest? Do questions of right and wrong no longer matter? And can Israel really be considered the “stronger party” when the Palestinians have the backing of the entire Muslim world and much of the non-Muslim world as well? The votes at the U.N. tell us which side – Israel or the Palestinians – has the greater international backing.

Obama then accused Netanyahu of an “orchestrated” push against him, which he argued underscored that “normal policy differences with an Israeli prime minister exacted a domestic political cost.”

Obama seems to think that it is somehow unfair or illegitimate for Israel to be able to call on its American allies for support. Why? Should those who are pro-Israel in this country remain silent when they think Israel is being treated unfairly by an Administration? Are supporters of Israel any different from any similar group, such as Armenian-Americans pressuring Congress to recognize the Armenian genocide, or Greek-Americans pushing for stronger measures to be against Turkey for its continued occupation of Northern Cyprus and its searching for natural gas in the maritime waters of Greece and Cyprus?

The difference is only in the size and strength and success of the pro-Israel lobby; apparently it is this success which so agitates Obama. He appears to think that Israel’s supporters should tug at their forelocks and know their place when their

betters – Kerry, Rice, Obama – hand down from on high their Middle East policy. Essentially, Obama finds their exercise of their first amendment rights on behalf of Israel inexcusable. It's not fair, he says, for there to be a "domestic political cost" to be paid by those who have policy differences with Israel. Why is it "unfair"? If a voter thinks that a certain Congressman – or President – supports a wrong, foreign policy, whether it be hostility to Israel to appeasement of Iran, or a wrong domestic policy, from tax reform to climate change legislation, why should that voter not oppose that Congressman's or President's reelection? Isn't that what democracy is all about? Are Americans not entitled to express their disagreement on foreign policy matters through the support they give or withhold from political leaders? Obama seems to think that when it comes to Israel, they should fall meekly into line and not take issue with the policy of their betters in government, no matter how naïve, ill-conceived, and dangerous that policy might be.

Obama also charges Netanyahu with "orchestrating" a campaign against him. That word smacks of some sinister cabal, or some puppet-master pulling strings. But all it really means is that Netanyahu and his government naturally attempted to marshal American supporters of Israel against policies by Obama that Netanyahu felt endangered Israel's security. Why is that wrong? Would Obama have preferred that Israel said or did nothing when it felt that its closest ally was undermining its security? Yes, I think he would.

First published in