

MR. CLARIFICATION MEETS MR. CLARITY

– Obama and Netanyahu

June 8, 2011

What Started It All?

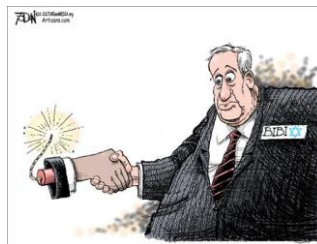
Just as Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was recently leaving for the U.S., President Obama gave a policy speech in which he stated what turned out to be some very controversial words:

The United States believes that negotiations should result in two states, with permanent Palestinian borders with Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, and permanent Israeli borders with Palestine. The borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states. The Palestinian people must have the right to govern themselves, and reach their potential, in a sovereign and contiguous state.

So What's the Big Deal?

According to news reports, Netanyahu had recently addressed the Israeli Knesset in a manner that was uncharacteristically “dovish.” He apparently spoke of, or insinuated, several concessions he would be willing to support in order to end the conflict, and which he would be discussing during his upcoming visit to the U.S. to meet with Jewish/American groups and President Obama. According to Caroline Glick, a writer for the Jerusalem Post, Netanyahu’s surprising tone “betrayed” a desire to set the stage for a meeting with Obama which would be devoid of conflict. She also stated:

Both strategically and ideologically, Netanyahu's speech [to the Israeli Knesset] constituted a massive concession to Obama. The premier had good reason to believe that his speech would preempt any US demand for further Israeli concessions during his visit to Washington. Alas, it was not to be. Instead of welcoming Netanyahu's unprecedented concessions, Obama dismissed them as insufficient as he blindsided Netanyahu on Thursday with his speech at the State Department



So, just as he was about to board his plane, Netanyahu realized that his mission in the US capital had changed. His job wasn't to go along to get along. His job was to stop Obama from driving Israel's relations with the U.S. off a cliff. Netanyahu was no longer going to Washington to explain where Israel will stand aside. He was going to Washington to explain what Israel stands for. Obama threw down the gauntlet.

*Netanyahu needed to pick it up by rallying both the Israeli people to his side and rallying the American people to Israel's side. **Both goals, he realized could only be accomplished by presenting his vision of what Israel is and what it stands for. And Netanyahu did his job. He did his job brilliantly.***

During the public portion of the meeting at the White House, Obama unexpectedly jumped in and spoke first, apparently to “preempt,” or set the debate. It was to no avail! Obama walked right into the Prime Minister’s waiting barrage! Benjamin Netanyahu responded as any patriot would when his country had been betrayed and thrown under the bus by an ally – he clearly, but politely, publicly denounced Obama’s policy statement. The Prime Minister bluntly reminded the president that "a peace based on illusions will crash eventually on the rocks of Middle Eastern reality."



What a contrast in style and statements! “Between the eyes” frankness vs. slippery nuance. One is eloquent and certain; the other is “back on his heels” while glaring at his “opponent.” One is full of clarity; the other rife with a need for clarification!

A couple days after the White House meeting, the Prime Minister addressed a joint meeting of Congress. As compared with the glaring tension of the Obama/Netanyahu meeting, the warmth of his Congressional reception provided a sharp contrast. The affection for Netanyahu in the chamber was palpable! The Israeli Prime Minister received 29 standing ovations from Congress during his address; at President Obama's last State of the Union he got 25.

As I started to discuss in a previous report, Arabs – and apparently President Barack Obama – think Israel's borders should revert to essentially what they were before the 1967 Six Day War. But remember that the area originally set aside for "Jewish Palestine" **included the Golan Heights, all of the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.** That’s important to remember. President Obama's understanding of Middle Eastern history seems to go back no further than 1967. I suppose Netanyahu figured if Obama learned a little more, he'd make fewer mistakes in the future. And maybe that’s what the Prime Minister was trying to do – teach Obama a little history.



Why Is the Obama Peace Method Rejected by Israel?

Quite Simple! Consider the following points:

- I favor this theory: When the myriad of issues and disagreements are boiled down, what any eventual negotiations will hinge upon are two things – 1) the final boundaries of a Palestinian state and 2) the Palestinian refugee “right of return.” The first is what the Israelis have to protect, defend, and wisely spend (or bargain with), and the second is the issue for the Palestinians to protect, defend and judiciously spend (or bargain with). Each of those issues is, therefore, the most important “card” each of the adversaries holds.
- I don’t believe the issue of mutual recognition (i.e. the right of both to exist as independent countries) will be the final obstacle to negotiations. While some of the extremists on both sides hold adamantly opposed to mutual recognition, I have seen poll information indicating that the vast majority of each general population supports such a mutual agreement.
- President Obama emphasizes that the “1967 borders” must be the starting point for negotiations. This removes the Israeli’s main bargaining strength without asking any initial concession of the Palestinians. Is he assuming the Palestinian bargain position?
- Consider the following valid observation – “each side has a major card to play and a major compromise to make; for Israel, that card is the West Bank, and the compromise is returning to the 1967 lines with agreed-upon adjustments and land swaps; for the Palestinians, that card is ‘the right of return,’ and the compromise is an agreement that the Palestinian refugees will be settled in Palestine and not in Israel’ – in other words, that there will be no right to ‘return’ to Israel.” That quote is from Alan M. Dershowitz recalling a discussion with “disputed” Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad Salaam.
- Dershowitz also explains that President Obama's stated policy requires Israel to give up its most important card and to make a "wrenching compromise" by dismantling most of the West Bank settlements and ending its occupation of the West Bank. But it does not require the Palestinians to give up their card and to compromise on the right of return. **In other words, Obama wants the negotiations to start only after Israel has relinquished their most important negotiating advantage.**



- It seems that Obama took "the Palestinian goal" and made it the his goal. It is hard to imagine a more radically anti-Israel policy shift than that. His response to relentless Palestinian intransigence is to reward it – by abandoning earlier the “W” Bush assurances, legitimizing the 1967 borders and refusing to reaffirm America's rejection of the right of return.
- Central to Israel's continued existence as the nation-state of the Jewish people is the Palestinian recognition that there can be no so-called "right of return" to Israel, and that the Palestinian leadership and people must acknowledge that Israel will continue to exist as the nation-state of the Jewish people within secure and recognized boundaries. Unless President Obama sends that clear message, not only to the Israelis but to the Palestinians as well, he will not move the peace process forward. He will move it backward
- Obama declared that the Arab-Israeli conflict should be resolved along "the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps." As Charles Krauthammer points out, "mutually" means both parties have to agree and if Israel starts by giving back the territory they won when attacked in 1967, **why would the Palestinians then agree to the previous territorial lines?** Then, by definition, you're back to the 1967 lines. Obama told Israel it must negotiate the right of return with the Palestinians **AFTER** having given back every inch of territory. Bargaining with what?
- **Please note how badly Obama would undermined Israel's negotiating position!** He is demanding that Israel go into peace talks having already forfeited its claim to the territory won in the '67 war – its best card for negotiation.
- **Or should I say Obama WOULD HAVE undermined Israeli’s negotiating position had Netanyahu not taken such a convincing stand in his rebuttal to Obama and to the joint meeting of the House and Senate.**

Since Obama Said He Was “Misrepresented,” Let Him Have a Chance to Clarify!

Quite characteristically, the “Master of Nuance and Clarification” (“MoNaC” for short - that be Obama) bluntly insisted that his statements had been “misrepresented.” I believe that remarks should stand on their own more often than they do with our President. In reaction to Netanyahu’s eloquent rebuke and explanation of the “facts of life” in the Middle East, MoNaC stated that his original statement about the mutual “swaps” meant: "by definition that the parties themselves — Israelis and Palestinians — will negotiate a border that is different" from 1967 and that this is consistent with Netanyahu’s goals and prior U.S. policy. Go back and read it again – that’s not what Obama said. He clearly was emphasizing the 1967 borders – the “swaps” were almost an afterthought. I think he is now isolated politically on the issue of boundaries.

Additionally, White House officials say MoNaC’s assertion did not reflect a shift in U.S. policy. That’s NOT accurate! In his June 24, 2002 Rose Garden speech, President George W. Bush made clear that the purpose of Oslo was NOT the creation of a Palestinian state, but peace. He indicated to the Palestinians that the notion that a Palestinian state is NOT inevitable – and he let them know that it must be earned. He made clear that a Palestinian state would not be born from terrorism. Charles Krauthammer reminds us that President George W. Bush also gave a written commitment that America opposed any return to the 1967 lines and stood firm against the

so-called Palestinian right of return to Israel. For 2½ years, the Obama administration has refused to recognize and reaffirm these assurances.

But Why Would Obama Pick on Israel?

Here I'm going to do some educated speculation which is reinforced by an analysis done by economist and author Thomas Sowell.

Obama's attitude toward Israel is consistent with his background as radical student, left wing activist, community organizer, and instructor in the Alinsky Method (refer to an earlier full report on this topic). The Alinsky Method takes the elements of Saul Alinsky's book "Rules for Radicals" and applies them to organizing and motivating activists and the citizen groups.



Central to Obama's policy statement is a requirement that negotiations start with Israel giving up current territory it acquired after neighboring countries threatened its survival in 1967. This is consistent with Alinsky's teachings and methods whereby the struggle is between the "Haves" and the "Have Nots." Israel is one of the Haves. Its neighbors remain among the Have Nots, despite their oil wealth. Obama has bent over backward to support the side that his ideology favors – not the Israelis. His ideology is one of envy, resentment and restitution. Political analyst Tod Lindberg said it this way: "Obama sees the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in the context of the full panoply of repression in the Middle East—that is, as contrary to 'the broader aspirations of ordinary people' throughout the region."

This ideological background manifests itself in an obvious display of little instinctive warmth for Israel – in fact, it is an aloof coolness. All this convinces me to agree with what many see as Obama's lack of empathy for Israel's security predicament – out of naïveté or ideology, I'm not sure which.