

**AN ANTI-ISRAEL PRESIDENT**  
Bret Stephens

*Wall Street Journal, May 24, 2011*

**Say what you will about President Obama's approach to Israel—or of his relationship with American Jews—he sure has mastered the concept of *chutzpah*.**

**[Last] Thursday at the State Department, the president gave his big speech on the Middle East, in which he invoked the claims of friendship to tell Israelis “the truth,” which to his mind was that “the status quo is unsustainable, and Israel too must act boldly to advance a lasting peace.” On Friday in the Oval Office, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered his version of the truth, which was that the 1967 border proposed by Mr. Obama as a basis for negotiating the outlines of a Palestinian state was a nonstarter.**

**Administration reaction to this reciprocal act of friendly truth-telling? “That was Bibi over the top,” the *New York Times* quoted one senior U.S. official, using the prime minister's nickname. “That's not how you address the president of the United States.” Maybe so. Then again, it isn't often that this or any other U.S. president welcomes a foreign leader by sandbagging him with an adversarial policy speech a day before the visit....**

**The contempt was again on display Sunday, when Mr. Obama spoke to the AIPAC policy conference in Washington. The speech was stocked with the perennial bromides about U.S.-Israeli friendship, which brought an anxious crowd to its feet a few times. As for the rest, it was a thin tissue of falsehoods, rhetorical legerdemain, telling omissions and self-**

**contradictions. Let's count the ways.**

**For starters, it would be nice if the president could come clean about whether his line about the 1967 line—"mutually agreed swaps" and all—was path-breaking and controversial, or no big deal. On Sunday, Mr. Obama congratulated himself for choosing the hard road to Mideast peace as he prepares for re-election, only to offer a few minutes later that "there was nothing particularly original in my proposal."**

**Yet assuming Mr. Obama knows what he's talking about, he knows that's untrue: No U.S. president has explicitly endorsed the '67 lines as the basis for negotiating a final border.... Mr. Obama would also know that in 2009 Hillary Clinton had described this formula as "the Palestinian goal." Now it's Mr. Obama's goal as well, even as he insists that "no peace can be imposed."**

**Then there was Mr. Obama's use of his favorite professorial trope: "Let me repeat what I actually said." What followed was a rehearsal of what he supposedly said on Thursday.**

**But Mr. Obama's problem isn't, as he supposes, that people aren't paying close enough attention to him. On the contrary, they've noticed that on Thursday Mr. Obama called for Israel to make territorial concessions to some approximation of the '67 lines *before* an agreement is reached on the existential issues of refugees and Jerusalem. "Moving forward now on the basis of territory and security," he said, "provides a foundation to resolve these two issues in a way that is just and fair, and that respects the rights and aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians."**

**Mr. Obama neglected to mention these points on Sunday, hence the telling omission. But the essence of his proposal is that Israel should cede territory, put itself into a weaker position, and then hope for the best. This doesn't even amount to a land-for-peace formula.**

**That's not all. Mr. Obama got some applause Sunday by calling for a "non-militarized" Palestinian state. But how does that square with his comment, presumably applicable to a future Palestine, that "every state has a right to self-defense"? Mr. Obama was also cheered for his references to Israel as a "Jewish state." But why then obfuscate on the**

**question of Palestinian refugees, whose political purpose over 63 years has been to destroy Israel as a Jewish state?**

**And then there was that line that “we will hold the Palestinians accountable for their actions and their rhetoric.” Applause! But can Mr. Obama offer a single example of having done that as president, except perhaps at the level of a State Department press release?**

**What, then, would a pro-Israel president do? He would tell Palestinians that there is no right of return. He would make the reform of the Arab mindset toward Israel the centerpiece of his peace efforts. He would outline hard and specific consequences should Hamas join the government.**

**Such a vision could lay the groundwork for peace. What Mr. Obama offered is a formula for war, one that he will pursue in a second term. Assuming, of course, that he gets one.**

#### **HEAR NO MIDDLE EAST, SEE NO MIDDLE EAST**

**Barry Rubin**

*FrontPage Blog, May 21, 2011*

**President Barack Obama’s speech on Middle East policy did more damage to U.S.-Israel relations than anything said by any previous president during the almost forty-year alliance between the two countries. Yet, ironically, the speech wasn’t intended to be on Israel at all; Obama apparently thought he was being friendly toward Israel....**

**The crisis, then, was caused by three factors: The ignorance of the Obama Administration over the issues involved; Obama’s chronic lack of friendliness toward Israel; and his refusal to recognize the threat from revolutionary Islamism.**

**His speech mainly focused on a totally uncritical evaluation of the current upheavals in the Arab world. The idea that Egypt is about to**

become a radical state, that the Egypt-Israel treaty is jeopardized, and that Israel is now facing the prospect of a renewed enemy to its southwest with twelve times its own population simply has not entered Obama's calculations.

In other words, Obama is asking Israel to make risky concessions at the very moment when its security situation is potentially at its worst in the last thirty years. The assumption that Arab states would not launch a conventional war on Israel—which has prevailed since Egypt moved toward peace in 1978—no longer holds.

The fact that the president blithely sees no danger whatsoever from the Egyptian situation or the current upheavals in the region—a point that was the main theme of his speech—reduces his credibility with Israel to zero.

A second factor that makes Obama's timing dangerously thoughtless is that he is rewarding the Palestinian Authority (PA) after it made a cooperation deal with the revolutionary Islamist group Hamas. Of course, Hamas is an openly antisemitic organization that makes no secret of its refusal to recognize Israel, its pride in committing terrorism, and its intention to commit genocide against Israel's Jews....

In practice, Obama accepts the entry of Hamas into the PA government, just as he accepts that of Hezbollah into Lebanon's government, and the Muslim Brotherhood into Egypt's government. While the president's rhetoric on Israel and the Palestinians is studiously "even-handed" his policy is clearly on the other side, that of Israel's and America's enemies.

I don't think Obama realizes this fact. But who cares? That's what he's doing and it is catastrophic for the United States, its Arab allies, and Israel.

But there's more! In his speech Obama took a tough verbal stance against the PA's plan to get the UN General Assembly to grant Palestine independence unilaterally in September.... While it is nice to know that the Obama Administration will vote against the proposal—one can't take anything for granted with this president—that's not what's most important. In line with his principle of not taking leadership, Obama isn't

lobbying strenuously to press other countries to oppose the measure or the PA to drop the idea, and certainly isn't threatening to punish them if they do.

Thus, this fiasco, which destroys even the chance for any Israel-PA talks in 2011 and perhaps for far longer, is partly the result of American passivity.

Yet the list of administration mistakes on these issues is still not complete. In his speech, Obama proposed a plan. Again, he tipped his hat at Israel by saying that he wouldn't try to impose a solution—no doubt thinking that would win him praise from Israel—but then made a proposal that totally tramples on Israel's interests.

Obama's idea was that Israel would withdraw from the remainder of the West Bank and turn it over to the PA in exchange for unspecified security guarantees. Palestine could become a state and the issues of Jerusalem and refugees would be postponed.

The effect of such an outcome would be to throw away all of Israel's leverage on the remaining issues; free the Palestinians to do what they wanted; and exchange real strategic assets (land) for promises written on paper (security guarantees). Given the PA's past practices and the European-American implementation of their own pledges, that would be very flimsy paper indeed.

Then there is Obama's refusal to give credit to Israel for the ways it has already shown its desire for peace, readiness to make concessions, and willingness to take risks in order to resolve the conflict. He never mentions that Israel has already withdrawn from the Sinai Peninsula, returned small amounts of territory to Jordan, pulled completely out of Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, and given the PA all the Arab-populated portions of the West Bank (except a small area in Hebron).

Most annoying of all, in discussing what Israel has done "wrong" in the speech he said that Israeli settlement activity is continuing. Since Israel froze construction for nine months at Obama's request (and the PA then refused to talk) one might expect some gratitude on the president's part for Israel's cooperation and some criticism for the PA's refusal to do

what Obama asked.

If Obama refuses to acknowledge, much less reward, Israeli cooperation and concessions in the past, Israelis and Israeli leaders know that he won't do so in future. If Obama refuses to maintain past U.S. pledges to Israel—like the country being able to annex settlement blocs and support for Israel being recognized by the PA as a Jewish state in a peace agreement—Israelis have no faith in any promises including security guarantees he offers in future....

Israel is not going to allow a president with no credibility, who clearly doesn't understand what's at stake, fails to support his Arab allies, is soft on his Iranian and Syrian enemies, doesn't learn from his past errors, is sacrificing U.S. interests in the region, and pays no attention to what's happening in Egypt, to determine its future.

And it isn't just Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who thinks that way. There's a national consensus on the issue. For almost two and a half years, Israel has played along with Obama, working hard to avoid friction, because the relationship with the United States is of tremendous importance. There was some hope that Obama would learn from experience or, at least, the bilateral relationship could muddle through his four-year term.

Now, however, in large part because of the revolution in Egypt definitely headed toward radicalism and probably toward Islamism, and the PA's readmission of Hamas—as well as Obama's failure to learn much about the Middle East and Israel's situation—that effort has come to an end.

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**A TALE OF TWO BETRAYALS**  
Steve McCann  
*American Thinker, May 22, 2011*

**The President of the United States has willingly and with forethought placed...Israel, whose existence America has guaranteed since 1948, in an untenable situation by his attempt to impose a course of action that, if not followed by Israel, will further...cause international sentiment to turn against [the Jewish State]....**

**President Obama is attempting to force a settlement on terms dictated by the Arabs in the Middle East. By setting as a pre-condition the surrender of territory commensurate with the pre-1967 boundaries in any negotiations with the Palestinians, he has instead guaranteed further conflict....**

**In case the President isn't aware, about this time 73 years ago there was an eerily similar situation taking place in Europe. Czechoslovakia was a country formed out of the re-drawing of boundaries after the horrific slaughter of World War I and the surrender of Germany and Austria. Much of the Czech border was adjacent to what was left of Germany, but it was a defensible border against a nation which for decades exhibited a particularly aggressive stance against its neighbors.**

**The new nation quickly developed its own economy, government and military while avoiding much of the financial and political chaos taking place in Germany during the 1920's and 30's. However, along its border with Germany was a region called Sudetenland which contained many ethnic Germans, who for the most part were quite content to live within the boundaries of Czechoslovakia.**

**Adolf Hitler upon assuming power in Germany almost immediately began [plotting to] re-institute the old German-speaking empire in Europe. Once he realized that the other strong Western European powers would not stand in the way of his immediate ambitions, such as the re-occupation of the Rhineland (controlled by France), he cast his eye toward Czechoslovakia.**

**In April of 1938, Hitler, together with his allies in the Sudeten Nazi party, issued a demand that Sudetenland be made autonomous and allied with Nazi Germany. [This] request, if granted, would leave Czechoslovakia**

unprotected, as almost all its border defenses were located in this region.... The Czech government refused to acquiesce to these absurd demands.

Hitler then, knowing that the governments of France and the United Kingdom were set on avoiding war at any cost, ratcheted up his demands and threatened to begin a war by invading Czechoslovakia. Both France and Britain advised the Czech government to accede to Hitler's wishes or they would not support the country in the event of a war.

Hitler and his henchmen then began to foment unrest in the Sudetenland, which prompted military action by the Czech army in an attempt to restore order. Hitler then claimed that the Czech were indiscriminately slaughtering Sudeten Germans (a wholly false accusation). He demanded that the French and British [permit a] German takeover of the region. They agreed and issued an ultimatum to the Czechs, making their commitment to Czechoslovakia's existence contingent on accepting Hitler's demands.

The Czechs reluctantly accepted; however Hitler then increased his demands once more insisting that the claims of ethnic Germans in Poland and Hungary also be satisfied which would have the effect of further decreasing not only Czechoslovakia's border with Germany but also its border with Poland to the north and Hungary to the South....

The Czech government refused...and began to mobilize its military. On September 28, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Neville Chamberlin, appealed for a conference with Hitler on this matter along with France and Italy. Czechoslovakia was not invited.

A deal was reached the next day. The German army was to occupy the Sudetenland by October 10, 1938, and an international commission would decide the fate of the other disputed areas; Hitler agreed that he had no further designs on the country and would leave the balance of the Czechoslovakia in peace. The allies would therefore guarantee the survival of the remainder of the country.

Czechoslovakia was informed by Britain and France that it could resist Nazi Germany alone, as they would not honor their defense agreements



with Czechoslovakia.... Given that option the Czechs capitulated.

Neville Chamberlin flew back to London and proclaimed this Agreement, now known as the "Munich Pact", together with a new peace treaty with Germany as "Peace in our time."

Within six months Czechoslovakia ceased to exist as:

- 1) October 1938: Germany occupied the Sudetenland
- 2) October 1938: Poland occupied parts of northern Czechoslovakia
- 3) November 1938: Hungary occupied parts of southern Czechoslovakia
- 4) March 1939: The remaining Czech territories were annexed and became part of Germany

Hitler having so successfully intimidated and bullied the European allies over Czechoslovakia and other territory then set his sights on Poland which was invaded in September of 1939 thus triggering the most devastating war in the history of mankind.

It is not a casual observation to notice how many parallels there are with the saga of Czechoslovakia and today's Israel....

[In this respect], Barack Obama, [due to] his recent actions, has forced a major question to be asked: will the United States reprise the role of France and Britain in 1938? Will Israel be intimidated and bullied into accepting terms that will have as their end-game the dissolution of the country?

Despite numerous efforts over the past forty years by Israel to negotiate and surrender some land, among other concessions, nothing has accomplish[ed] peace with the Palestinians...[nor will it] until all parties [are] equal[ly] commitment to peace.... It would do well for the President to understand history...[for his] attempt to force a settlement by appeasing the Arab street at the expense of Israel will only lead to a potential world-wide conflagration as Iran and it's...allies will only be emboldened to seek more concessions and ultimately war.

**PEACE IS NOT A PREREQUISITE TO ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL**

**Evelyn Gordon**

*Jerusalem Magazine, May 23, 2011*

**Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is undoubtedly agonizing right now over...[how] to mitigate the damage caused by US President Barack Obama's bombshell last week: the unprecedented demand that Israel withdraw to the 1967 lines without getting an end to the conflict in exchange, without such key issues as the refugees or Jerusalem even being addressed. Not even Europe or the Arab League ever went that far.**

**I don't know what Netanyahu should say. But I know one thing that he and other leading Israeli politicians desperately need to stop saying: that Israel's survival depends on signing a peace agreement with the Palestinians. For nothing so badly undermines Israel's position among all three of the relevant audiences—the Palestinians, the international community and Israelis themselves.**

**Five years ago, no Israeli leader would have dreamed of asserting that Israel's survival depends on anything any other nation does or doesn't do: The whole point of Zionism was to restore control over Jewish fate to the Jews themselves.**

**But in a 2007 media interview, then-prime minister Ehud Olmert famously declared that "If the day comes when the two-state solution collapses...the State of Israel is finished." And in the few short years since then, that astounding claim seems to have become *de rigueur* for Israeli politicians. Even Netanyahu himself echoed it at the official memorial ceremony for late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin last October, claiming that his own political camp, the center-right, has also now "acknowledged that it's impossible to survive in the long run without a political settlement."**

**Yet even if Israeli leaders believe this, it ought to be obvious that they shouldn't say it, because it completely eradicates Israel's leverage in**

**negotiations with the Palestinians. If all the Palestinians have to do to ensure Israel's eventual demise is to keep saying "no" to every offer of statehood, what conceivable incentive would they ever have to compromise? Why should they settle for the West Bank and Gaza if merely waiting a few decades would give them pre-1967 Israel too?**

**Such statements are equally devastating to Israel's effort to obtain international backing for its positions. Ever since the Oslo process began in 1993, Israel has been trying to convince the world that any agreement must accommodate its needs on issues like the refugees, Jerusalem, the settlement blocs and security arrangements. And ostensibly, it holds a very powerful bargaining chip: the threat that there will be no agreement if these needs aren't met.**

**Yet if Israel's very survival depends on the existence of a Palestinian state, then it is in no position to bargain; it will ultimately have to accept an agreement on any terms the Palestinians care to offer. Beggars, after all, can't be choosers. And if accommodating Israel's needs isn't actually necessary to obtain a deal, why should the international community—which has never been sympathetic to Israel's positions to begin with—support these positions?**

**Worst of all, however, is the impact such statements have on the Israeli public. After all, most Israelis have long since concluded that no peace deal is achievable in the foreseeable future. Thus if Israel's future truly depends on such a deal, the country has no future. And if so, why stay here? Why shouldn't any Israeli who can simply leave? Life in Israel has always entailed many difficulties; the prize that makes them all worth enduring is Jewish sovereignty—the Jewish people's ability, for the first time in 2,000 years, to determine its own fate. But if that prize is in fact beyond reach, why keep making the effort?**

**Indeed, such statements could well become self-fulfilling prophecies.... If our leaders have convinced themselves that only peace can save Israel, they will never even seek alternative strategies for surviving without peace, much less develop and implement them.**

**Theodor Herzl famously declared that "if you will it, it is no dream." But to will anything, you must first be able to conceive of it. And that,**

**ultimately, is the great challenge facing Netanyahu.... He must reverse five years of disastrous public discourse and persuade Israelis, and the world, that survival without peace is indeed conceivable. And then he must develop strategies to turn that idea into reality.**