

**OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY ALIENATES FRIENDS (ISRAEL), AND
IDEALIZES ENEMIES (ISLAMISTS)**

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Isranet Daily Briefing, December 8, 2014

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THE POWER OF EVENTS

Prof. Frederick Krantz

[CIJR](#), Dec. 5, 2014

It is an old dictum that sudden, unexpected events change politics. The collapse of Israel's governing coalition means a March election and new uncertainty, and this as terrorism continues, in and around Jerusalem as well as across the M.E., Iran, and Africa.

Meanwhile, Israel's situation is worsened by the ambivalence, political and military, of its major (indeed, only) ally, the U.S. Led by a lame-duck Democratic Administration, America's Hamlet-like President Barack Obama is first in (Syria), then out, then back (ditto re Iraq and Afghanistan); first he's affirming "no boots on the ground", then it's 1,500, now it may be 3,000; first they'll only be "trainers", then, armed, they'll support forward Iraqi echelons; and so on and on.

Yet even as Obama seems, however unwillingly, to ramp up US commitments to

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Iraq and Afghanistan, he continues to downsize (“sequestration”) American armed forces. The stated goal? To arrive at a force approximately the size (100,000) of the woefully inadequate Army and Navy of December 7, 1941, at the outbreak of World War II. And this as Russian aggression in Ukraine, and a threatening Chinese naval expansion, continue.

Then, the icing on the disintegrating cake: Obama forces out his hand-picked Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, a former U.S. Senator and battle-tested U.S. Army veteran, for a more compliant Ashton B. Carter, a neutral Pentagon administrator with absolutely no military background or credibility.

Two recent articles appearing simultaneously in a major newspaper summed up the contradictory, and dangerous, implications of such American ambivalence. One noted that, despite the resumption of American bombing of terrorist Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria, their expansion seems not have been appreciably slowed. The other article reported on growing concern in the American military that the new campaign was ill-conceived, too little, too late, and that extreme fear of the negative media impact of civilian casualties was rendering much of the bombing ineffective.

(Authorization for each mission has to be preceded by detailed reconnaissance flights, with each potential target then relayed to the U.S.-based Command Center for approval at the highest level. Such a slow, cumbersome process often results in the target moving on or disappearing. The Islamic State fighters—who of course are unconcerned about civilian casualties—have quickly learned how to disperse, hide, and otherwise evade both the reconnaissance process and the actual postponed follow-on attacks.)

America's continuing foreign policy and military hesitations (confusion?) have emboldened its, and Israel's, enemies. Together with the post-Arab Spring collapse of the M.E. state system, the advance of a new territory-acquiring

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terrorism, and ongoing Iranian nuclear development (yet another example of American irresolution), this was surely not the most auspicious moment for Israel's governing coalition to collapse.

But events can be turned to advantage. If Netanyahu can win a more stable center-right coalition in March, and (as the 2016 Presidential election looms) the recently-returned Republican majority in both Houses of Congress can put consistent foreign-policy pressure on the White House, the balance in 2015 may well turn in Israel's favor. It would be, as we celebrate Passover's message of Jewish freedom, a consummation devoutly to be desired.

(Prof. Frederick Krantz is President of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research and Editor of its ISRAFAX journal and Daily Isranet Briefing.)

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RUNNING FOR RE-ELECTION, AGAINST WHOM?

David M. Weinberg

[Israel Hayom](#), Dec. 5, 2014

In order to win the elections that have been foisted upon him, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu must run a focused campaign against Israel's bona fide foes, not against the novice and petty politicians with whom he has been squabbling. His kvetching about Tzipi Livni and Yair Lapid only diminishes him in the eyes of voters. Whiny rants about anarchy in the coalition won't advance Netanyahu too

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far. Instead, Netanyahu must market himself as a leader who transcends the local mud-slinging and who can responsibly navigate a path for Israel in the face of the many regional and international threats. To put it another way: Netanyahu indeed has rivals worth running against, but they are not Livni and Lapid, nor Avigdor Lieberman and Naftali Bennett. Netanyahu should be running against U.S. President Barack Obama and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Obama has made it clear that in coming period he is "not going to be able to manage" to fully defend Israel in international forums. Abbas is seeking condemnation, isolation, criminalization and boycott of Israel, alongside recognition of virtual Palestinian statehood. Obama is going to smirk from the sidelines. Obama himself will undoubtedly turn up the pressure on Israel in various ways in an attempt to precipitously force Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines. He isn't going to leave Israel alone for one single day. And we already know that the U.S. president has decided to acquiesce on Iran's near-nuclear status.

So, Israel has tough challenges ahead, and needs a leader who will stand firm. Netanyahu can and should say forthrightly to the Israeli public: I have stood strong against Obama's unfriendly pressures for six years. Re-elect me in order to see Israel through the ominous final two years of the Obama administration. This is messaging that would be both real and resonant. Israelis fear and resent Obama administration policies, even as they still overwhelmingly believe in America and the American-Israeli alliance. A Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies public opinion poll demonstrated this week that the Israeli public believes that the Obama administration has greatly weakened America's standing in the Middle East, and thinks that its policies on Iran, ISIS and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are truly "bad." This is a key electoral calling card for Netanyahu: Standing tall against a hostile world. It will become even more so if and when the Obama administration and European leaders attempt to intervene in the Israeli election campaign by warning the Israeli public that Israel can expect increased international isolation if Netanyahu is re-elected. Such intervention will likely backfire and actually benefit Netanyahu, as it has in past campaigns, but I suspect Obama and associates won't be able to resist.

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In fact, I assume that one of the genuine reasons Netanyahu is going to the polls now is directly linked to such expected pressures. Israel can't be expected to launch any risky diplomatic ventures while in electoral flux. By casting Israel into election mode for a lengthy period of time — it could be July before a new government settles into its cabinet seats — Netanyahu is running down the clock on Obama. That is not a bad diplomatic strategy at all; perfectly legitimate and understandable to the Israeli voter. After all, Netanyahu came to office in order to put a long-term break on the galloping withdrawals of the Oslo era. Netanyahu should find a way to own up to this strategy, even though it's not politically correct to admit to this in diplomatic company. I think he'll be rewarded by the Israeli public. Opposition Leader Isaac Herzog, Livni and Obama may consider Netanyahu a cowardly failure (or "chickenshit") because he won't match the follies of his predecessors and risk the country's security with territorial withdrawals that could result in the creation of another terror state on Israel's doorstep. But Israelis understand that Netanyahu's willingness to say no to Obama is all that stands between them and another fiasco like the destruction of Gush Katif and the gifting of Gaza to Hamas. And consider this too: Wouldn't it be sweet to see Netanyahu outlast Obama in office?

Then there is Abbas. Herzog can go on and on about the need to cut a deal with Abbas, and Livni can ridiculously and pompously assert with certainty that "With me in the negotiating room, peace is attainable" — but the Israeli public knows better. Abbas is washed up as a peace partner, certainly since he partnered with Hamas, launched a campaign of lies and incitement regarding the Temple Mount, and lauded terrorists who attacked Israelis in Jerusalem. Everybody in Israel remembers Abbas' monstrous speech at U.N. in September outrageously accusing Israel of "genocide" in Gaza. Netanyahu can capitalize on this, by highlighting the flimsiness and fancifulness of the opposition's belief in Abbas. I won't let us be suckered by Abbas again — Netanyahu can assert, and it will resonate.

Israeli society needed another election campaign just now like a hole in the head. So much invective, radical rhetoric, and ugliness is ahead — all of it cynically hyped and exaggerated for campaign purposes. Ugh. Therefore, Netanyahu must rise above the fray and focus on the big picture. There are concrete, looming challenges ahead, and nobody else running in this campaign is true prime

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ministerial material. That's not just an argument for re-election by default. It's a robust and realistic campaign platform.

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GROUND UP CHUCK

[Wall Street Journal](#), Nov. 24, 2014

Chuck Hagel wasn't our favorite to run the Pentagon, but it speaks volumes about this Administration's national security decision-making that even he turned out to be too independent for the job. The former Republican Senator and infantry soldier chose to resign ... rather than endure more White House micromanagement. As the first Administration official to depart since the election, Mr. Hagel looks like a ritual sacrifice, and not the right one. If President Obama really wanted a fresh start in his last two years, he'd begin by sacking most of his White House national security team. They're the tenderfoot Talleyrands who have presided over the radiating calamity in Syria, the collapse of the Iraqi military, the rise of Islamic State, and the failure to deter or stop Vladimir Putin 's march into Ukraine.

Why does national security adviser Susan Rice still have a job? Or spinner-in-chief Ben Rhodes ? Mr. Hagel was hired in part because Mr. Obama believed he would take orders from these visionaries. But as the world turned darker, the Pentagon chief began to represent the views of the generals who are increasingly worried about U.S. security. His worst sin appears to have been sending a memo in October pointing out that the President had to clarify his Syria policy for his campaign against Islamic State to succeed. Mr. Hagel was reflecting the views of senior Pentagon brass. Mr. Hagel has since been vindicated as the U.S. has

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watched while Bashar Assad 's government tries to wipe out the Free Syrian Army rebels we are training to be our allies, and Turkey keeps a distance from the coalition because we won't help to oust Assad. But telling the truth in this Administration gets you a scolding from Vice President Valerie Jarrett, and on Tuesday White House leakers were saying Mr. Hagel wasn't creative enough in providing security options. The options this White House seems to want are those that provide the appearance of solving problems without having to solve them.

Mr. Hagel's departure might matter if it means that President Obama recognizes the dangers he faces in his last two years. Everywhere we go we keep hearing the same phrase—that rogues believe they now have a “two-year window” to press their gains until a new President takes office. Other Presidents have recognized failures and adapted in their last two years. George W. Bush switched Defense Secretaries and overrode senior generals to implement the surge that defeated al Qaeda in Iraq. Jimmy Carter , watching the march of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and Central America, began the U.S. rearmament that Ronald Reagan accelerated. Mr. Obama could likewise adapt with the help of a GOP Senate. John McCain will soon chair the Armed Services Committee, and Mr. Obama and a new defense chief could work with him to reverse the freefall in U.S. defense spending. They could end the defense sequester, fortify NATO's eastern front, and pursue a more aggressive military campaign against Islamic State. Joe Lieberman, the hawkish former Democratic Senator, would be an inspired choice, if he could be cajoled to accept. Michèle Flournoy, who has written for these pages, has Pentagon experience and seems to have enough gumption to challenge the White House. Rhode Island Sen. Jack Reed has military experience but has never stood out on Armed Services. Whoever the choice, it won't matter unless Mr. Obama recognizes the growing disorder and reverses course himself.

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ENOUGH IDEALISM

David French

[*National Review*](#), Sept. 29, 2014

As the president who pledged to end two wars restarts our fight in Iraq (and perhaps expands it into Syria), it's worth reflecting on one of the cardinal lessons of our 13 years of post-9/11 conflict against jihad: Idealism kills. President George W. Bush, infamous as a "warmonger" to the Left and mocked for his allegedly black-and-white, Manichean worldview, was an idealist. The president who consistently opposed "evildoers" and decried the "axis of evil" is also the president who proclaimed Islam a religion of peace and declared, "I believe God has planted in every human heart the desire to live in freedom." President Barack Obama, by contrast, apologized for the sins of the Bush era and declared in Cairo, "Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia and Cordoba during the Inquisition. I saw it firsthand as a child in Indonesia, where devout Christians worshiped freely in an overwhelmingly Muslim country." Never mind that Cordoba and Andalusia happened to be conquered territories — conquered by Muslim armies; the idealism shines through.

But while Presidents Bush and Obama both declared affection for Islam in their words, their deeds reveal two distinctly different kinds of idealism, both of which move far beyond the all-too-familiar willingness of politicians to deliver "up with people" political saccharin in speeches. Speeches are one thing, policies another — more consequential — thing altogether. In their policies, George Bush possessed a deadly idealism about our potential friends, while Barack Obama possesses a deadly idealism about our enemies...

President Obama is a creature of the American academic Left, with all its assumptions about the way the world works. The short version of its view of the Middle East is this: Muslim extremism grows out of a series of legitimate grievances, including Israeli treatment of Palestinians, American military actions

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and alleged economic exploitation, and oppressive, Western-supported regimes. Deal with the grievances and you can blunt or neuter the extremism. And so, in a series of colossal foreign-policy blunders, President Obama has actively sided with jihadists in both military and political conflicts — going beyond appeasement to render actual aid (or to attempt to render aid) to some of the world's most extreme Islamic movements. In Libya, we used the might of NATO airpower to tip the balance in the civil war to a motley collection of jihadists — jihadists who later thanked us by overrunning our diplomatic compound in Benghazi (killing four Americans) and most recently have been filmed swimming in our ambassador's pool in Tripoli.

In Egypt, we immediately affirmed our support for the Muslim Brotherhood government and promised to continue arms shipments (including F-16s and M1 Abrams tanks) even as the Muslim Brotherhood stood aside and allowed a screaming mob to overrun our embassy, launched a nationwide campaign of persecution against Egypt's Coptic Christian minority, violated the Camp David Accords by moving heavy weapons into the Sinai, and provided direct aid and comfort to Hamas, a State Department-designated terror organization. Even worse, when the Muslim Brotherhood was overthrown, in what some have called the largest political protests in history, and replaced with a government that cut off Hamas, restored cooperation with Israel, and took steps to protect the Copts, only then did we end our military aid.

In Gaza, Secretary of State John Kerry defied both Egypt and Israel to advance Hamas's key allies — Turkey and Qatar — in cease-fire talks, leading to angry denunciations in Israel and one of the worst diplomatic crises in the long history of the American-Israeli alliance. Using the language of moral equivalence to describe the terror tactics of Hamas and the lawful military actions of Israel was its own appalling scandal. In Syria, the Obama administration has repeatedly sought to arm and support jihadists fighting the Assad regime (and now allegedly fighting the Islamic State). These jihadists are every bit as brutal as Assad, have reportedly signed non-aggression pacts with the Islamic State, and have apparently already allowed American-supplied weapons to fall into the Islamic State's hands.

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And now we face a Middle East in flames, strained relations with key allies (Israel, Egypt, and the Kurds), and jihadists controlling more territory with more men under arms than before 9/11. This summary doesn't even include Iran's growing strength and our looming exit from Afghanistan, where President Obama's idealistic "benevolent counterinsurgency" (Bing West's excellent description in his recent book *One Million Steps*) has largely failed to create conditions similar to those that followed President Bush's much harder-edged surge in Iraq.

It's time to end the idealism. How many times must it fail before we face reality? Our nation first and foremost must understand its enemies. Jihadists cannot be appeased, they do not have "legitimate grievances," and they mock and exploit our naïve hopes for their reform. One does not end jihad by providing F-16s to the Muslim Brotherhood or close air support to Syria's Army of Mujahedeen. At the same time, however, we must be careful about our friends. We have to replace foolish hopes and deadly dreams with hard-nosed evaluations of action. Allies such as the Kurds have proven themselves reliable time and again, and Egypt's new government has shown promise in its treatment of Hamas. Yet, bizarrely, the Obama administration seems more willing to arm jihadists in Syria than to arm the Kurdish peshmerga in Iraq.

Always — always — we must project real strength. The people of the Middle East don't respect weakness and are unimpressed with kindness when it's combined with weakness. I'll never forget the frustration and contempt that, during my own deployment in Iraq, we got from local villagers when we expressed reluctance to raid a mosque housing a known jihadist terror cell. They were utterly unimpressed with our attempts to respect their faith and instead received the message that only the jihadists had a true commitment to victory. In the Middle East, idealism leads to weakness, and weakness leads not just to death but also to everlasting contempt. This is how the world's sole military superpower becomes a laughingstock and our citizens pay the price — pawns in jihadists' deadly games as they jockey for power and prestige in a region that respects strength more than it cares about even the best of our naïve ideals.

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On Topic

[Poll Finds Israelis Appreciate US Support, Wary of Obama's Policies](#): Tamar Pileggi, *Times of Israel*, Dec. 5, 2014—Israelis have an overwhelming appreciation of the United States, but harbor increasingly negative views of US President Barack Obama's Middle East foreign policy, according to a public opinion poll carried out by Bar-Ilan University's Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

[Increasing Numbers of Jewish Democrats Disillusioned With Obama](#): Isi Leibler, *Candidly Speaking*, Dec. 4, 2014—It has been reported that American Jews still voted overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party in the recent midterm congressional elections.

[The 'Peace Process' That Kills](#): Charles Bybelezer, *Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 24, 2014—The region was already burning when US Secretary of State John Kerry rolled into town in July 2013, on his fifteenth-odd visit to Jerusalem, Ramallah or Amman in some four months on the job.

[Obama: Helping Terror Go Nuclear](#): Noah Beck, *Arutz Sheva*, Nov. 20, 2014 —Last Tuesday's terror attack on a Jerusalem synagogue killed five people: four rabbis (including three born in the USA) and a Druze police officer.

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