



## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Ballabon also wrote: "It is troubling enough that Biden would re-engage with the terror-supporting P.A. and send it money (also likely a violation of U.S. law); but to establish a beachhead for a hostile terrorist pseudo-government in the center of a sovereign state's capital? To

promote the P.A. while it continues publicly to pay terrorists and promote the eradication of all Israel?"

10. *It sends a discriminatory signal.*

For the United States to open a consulate in Jerusalem just for Arabs "delivers a dangerous and ambiguous signal that this administration may well support a divided Jerusalem," writes former Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams. "The fact that the United States is even considering such a move is another unfortunate example of Israel being held to a different and discriminatory standard by the international community. Other nations, including the United States, would not allow a foreign country to divide their capitals or open consulates therein serving a third party or foreign entity ...

"The United States should respect Israel's choice of Jerusalem as its capital and not make it the only place on earth where the United States places both its embassy and a permanent mission to a foreign entity in the capital of a sovereign state. That is precisely the kind of damaging and discriminatory treatment of Israel that Democrats and Republicans in Congress have long pledged to avoid and indeed to condemn." (JNS Aug 25)

## Commentary...

### 10 Reasons not to Reopen the US Consulate in Jerusalem

By Chaim Silberstein And Hillel Fendel

Three months ago, when U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Israel and the Palestinian Authority, he declared that the Biden administration would reopen its consulate in Jerusalem. Until it was closed in 2019 by the Trump administration, following the opening of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem, the consulate had served as a de facto embassy for Arabs of the P.A.

Bennett must make it clear that Israel will absolutely not accept the decision to reopen the consulate, and here are 10 good reasons why:

1. *It undermines already-beleaguered Israeli sovereignty.*

Based on past experience, we know that a new consulate will serve as a de facto embassy for Arabs of the P.A. and even of Jerusalem, and this essentially undermines Israeli sovereignty in its capital.

"The act of establishing a Palestinian consulate in Jerusalem means recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. [This is] a dangerous decision ... a red line that cannot be crossed," said former Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, echoing the sentiment of most of the Knesset, both opposition and coalition members.

Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Aryeh King called the initiative "a spiteful move that seeks to undermine Israel's absolute sovereignty over Jerusalem"—sovereignty that continues to be under fire from those who wish to see Jerusalem become the capital of a new Arab state.

2. *It distances peace.*

Opening a consulate in Jerusalem for the P.A. will raise the authority's standing in Washington, thus encouraging it not to make concessions and perpetuating the state of non-peace or worse.

3. *The embassy obviates the need for a consulate.*

There is no need to reopen the consulate, as all consular services are already provided by the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem. As The Hill explained, "There is no case in the entire world where a [U.S.] consulate general exists in the same city as a U.S. embassy."

In 2019, some months after the embassy was opened in Jerusalem, all American diplomatic activity was logically and efficiently consolidated into a single mission—and no other one is needed.

4. *It violates international law.*

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961, which defines a framework for diplomatic relations between independent countries, stipulates that the "guest state may not, without the prior express consent of the receiving state, establish offices forming part of the mission in localities other than those in which the mission itself is established."

5. *It violates Israeli law.*

Israel's Basic Law: Jerusalem, the Capital of Israel (1980) stipulates that "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel." Opening a diplomatic mission in the city on behalf of a foreign entity is thus apparently illegal, as it establishes Jerusalem as the capital of a country other than Israel.

6. *It violates American law.*

The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, passed overwhelmingly by the U.S. House and Senate, recognizes a united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and states that "Jerusalem should remain an undivided city."

7. *It is a perpetual cause of friction.*

America's Jerusalem consulate has for decades been "a perpetual cause of friction with the U.S. Embassy to Israel and ... a hotbed for some anti-Israel ideologues," explained former U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman to journalist Michael Ireland. To this, one can add that the consulate has in the past worked closely with "Arabists" in the State Department, who are openly hostile to Israel.

8. *Ramallah should house a consulate, not Jerusalem.*

Even if the United States decides that it needs a consulate for P.A. Arabs, it should be in Ramallah, where the P.A. is entirely based. As Jeff Ballabon of the American Center for Law and Justice has written, "The PA has no presence in Jerusalem and has never been located there."

9. *It is a beachhead for a hostile terrorist government.*

### The US Withdrawal from Afghanistan Empowers International Terrorism

By Dore Gold

In a stunning statement last Friday in which he defended his withdrawal decision, President Joe Biden claimed that Al-Qaeda was "gone" from Afghanistan. The glaring problem with that claim is that Biden did not have the backing of the American security establishment to make it. An hour after Biden spoke, Defense Department Press Secretary John Kirby stated, "We know Al-Qaeda is a presence in Afghanistan."

A Defense Department report to Congress issued on Aug. 17 plainly states, "The Taliban continued to maintain its relationship with al-Qaeda, providing safe haven for the terrorist group in Afghanistan." Roughly at the same time, the Taliban released 5,000 prisoners from Bagram air base, which included Al-Qaeda and Islamic State operatives.

Nor was there a consensus on this issue within what had been the Western alliance. U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned that Western states needed to unite to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a sanctuary for international terrorist organizations. There were regular reports from the United Nations Security Council that looked at this question as well. In the twelfth report of its monitoring team, it is established that "a significant part of the leadership of al-Qaeda resides in the Afghanistan and Pakistan border region."

The Al-Qaeda presence was not confined to the borders alone. The report continues: "Large numbers of al-Qaeda fighters and other foreign extremist elements aligned with the Taliban are located in various parts of Afghanistan." It also makes clear that these were not peripheral elements of Al-Qaeda but rather its "core leadership."

Britain's defense minister, Ben Wallace, also asserted that Al-Qaeda "will probably come back." He makes reference to a U.N. report that states Al-Qaeda is present in 15 of Afghanistan's provinces. He also is aware of the fact that many in the West see Afghanistan as a "failed state," and notes that failed states have a propensity to become headquarters for terrorist groups.

The director of Britain's domestic intelligence agency, MI5, warned in July that Al-Qaeda would seek to re-establish its training facilities in Afghanistan if the opportunity opened up. Allies of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the Bundestag condemned Biden's decision to rapidly withdraw from Afghanistan.

So what was motivating the new U.S. drive to accelerate the military withdrawal? Many in Washington made reference to the agreement between the Taliban and the Trump administration from February 2020 on the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan.

However, the agreement made the withdrawal dependent upon the implementation by the Taliban of its commitment to not allow Al-Qaeda to use Afghan territory against American forces. Part Two of

the agreement contains a commitment by the Taliban “to prevent any group or individual, including al-Qaeda, from using the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States or its allies.”

There also was an underlying assumption, common in the West, that withdrawal would reduce the hostility of the Taliban and their allies. But this thinking represents a misunderstanding of what motivates jihadist groups; Al-Qaeda formally came into existence after the Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan. Across the Middle East, withdrawals have only strengthened the motivation of these groups.

The Israeli experience has been identical: When the Israel Defense Forces unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Hamas went on to win the Palestinian elections and then take over the Gaza Strip from Fatah. To defeat the jihadist forces it is necessary to accompany withdrawal with actions that leave no doubt as to that defeat. But it does not seem that President Biden will pursue such a strategy, leaving the West with an empowered Al-Qaeda to fight against in the years ahead. (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs / JNS Aug 26)

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### **Prime Minister Bennett: Please Summon the Courage to Ask the Hard Question** By Sarah N. Stern

If I had just a few minutes to speak with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett before his initial meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday, I would tell him this moment might be the most critical in the existence of the State of Israel since its founding. If Biden follows the premier’s advice, the United States might be able to overcome the international opprobrium that has resulted from the precipitous and chaotic Afghanistan withdrawal. I would let him know that the following actions would be a surefire way to regain American respectability among the community of nations. And if the prime minister plays his cards right—albeit, with maximal sensitivity, tact and diplomacy—the president just might appreciate and act on his advice.

Of course, I would start by telling Bennett that according to the International Atomic Energy Administration (IAEA), Iran is already producing highly enriched uranium at 60 percent—way beyond the level that was outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), better known as the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal. In September 2020, the IAEA said Iran had already exceeded 10 times their limit, and the IAEA has been unable to access many of the sites, including the major site of Natanz, in order to do its job.

Even outgoing Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (erroneously considered “moderate” in the wishful thinking of the West) stated this past July that Iran can now easily turn that into the 90 percent purification level necessary for weapons-grade uranium.

As former director of the CIA James Woolsey had once explained to me, the higher the level of enrichment, the faster to get to weapons-grade uranium.

I would very tactfully inform the president and secretary of state that negotiating “a longer, stronger deal” with Iran is clearly impossible. One of the major flaws involves Iranian missile development, and the new hardline President Ebrahim Raisi clearly stated in his first news conference since winning the election that there will be absolutely no negotiations on missile development.

During that same news conference, he categorically stated that he would never meet with America.

To have negotiations, both sides must look directly into one another’s eyes. The United States, throughout the negotiating process in Vienna, has been humiliated by Iran, which would not even allow them to be in the same room, and had to rely on the other P5 + 1 interlocutors (Russia, China, Britain, France, plus Germany) for any transfer of information.

Likewise, there is only a minuscule possibility that the sunset clauses in the JCPOA will be a subject of negotiations. One of those sunsets—the International Arms Embargo, or U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231—passed on Oct. 18, 2020, with very little fanfare.

Approximately two short years from now, in October of 2023, the United States and Europe will lift their sanctions against Iran. And by October 2025, all restrictions on Iran are to be terminated, and “the Iranian file will be closed.” These resolutions are actually somewhat tougher than the JCPOA because they included the work on missile development.

Iran has summarily ignored this treaty, as evidenced by the aerial images of clandestine work in Natanz.

I would explain to Prime Minister Bennett that the region has almost overnight become an infinitely more dangerous place since the Aug. 15 Afghan withdrawal. I would point to the statements from the Hamas leadership “congratulating the Taliban movement for its brave leadership which culminated after a long struggle of 20 years.”

The government of Pakistan—the world’s fifth-most populous

country—now under Taliban control, is feeling triumphant. One cannot help but get goosebumps over the fact that Pakistan already has a nuclear bomb.

Russia, after nine years of an unsuccessful campaign against the Taliban, is feeling emboldened at “the American defeat,” and making moves to establish diplomatic ties. And, of course, China—true to its essentially greedy nature—is ready to pounce on the almost \$3 trillion in mineral reserves.

Although Biden boasted in his press conference on Friday, “I have seen no question of our credibility from our allies around the world,” is it possible that he is so much in a cocoon of “Yes men” that he is not briefed about the devastating comments coming from some of our closest allies?

Britain, in particular, had reason to feel embittered. After all, they supplied a force second only to ours and lost 454 soldiers in battle in Afghanistan. Rory Stewart, a former British Cabinet Minister who had served in Afghanistan for many years, said about Biden: “He hasn’t just humiliated America’s Afghan allies. He has humiliated his Western allies by demonstrating their incompetence.”

Chairman of the German Parliament’s Foreign Relations Committee Norbert Röttgen stated “with a heavy heart and with horror over what is happening, the early withdrawal was a serious and far-reaching miscalculation by the current administration. This does fundamental damage to the political and moral credibility of the West.”

But none are feeling more abandoned than the interpreters and others who worked with U.S. forces and the 18 million Afghan women who began to experience the wonderful feeling of having reached a sort of enlightenment from under the shackles and chadors of the Taliban.

Our friends and allies in the Middle East, including Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Morocco, feel a profound sense of betrayal.

Does Biden’s rhetoric of “America is back” mean at the abandonment of all the commitments and promises that have been made to them? What of the pledge that “Iran will not be allowed to get a bomb on my watch”?

One of the many things we have given up on is intelligence on the ground in Afghanistan, which will soon become a haven for Al-Qaeda, ISIS and many other terrorist groups.

And now we come to the point of practical steps: Israel, with its stellar intelligence agencies, such as the Mossad, can be America and the West’s “eyes and ears.” As evidence of that, Bennett will have to go no further than Israel’s stunning 2018 raid on the nuclear warehouse in Tehran, when they were able to take 110,000 nuclear-related documents in broad daylight.

Israel is also a formidable superpower, along with the other two in the Middle East, Turkey and Iran. Our Sunni allies do not trust Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as far as they can throw him because they know he envisions himself as “Suleiman the Magnificent,” with illusions of re-establishing the Ottoman Empire throughout the region and the world. They are shivering for their lives against the Iranian nuclear threat at least as much as Israel is.

The Abraham Accords remain strong and robust. It might be impossible, given Biden’s tenacious insistence on Iran negotiations, but he could honestly boast “America is back” if the United States joined a coalition with Israel and Gulf Arab allies to attack the Iranian nuclear facilities.

Time is not on our side. We have a very short window in which America could redeem its international standing, and Israel, our Arab allies and the Western world as we know it could breathe a little easier.

I know it is hard, Prime Minister Bennett, but we have absolutely everything to lose. Please summon up the courage to ask the hard question. (JNS Aug 24)

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### **An Irrevocable Power Shift in Judea and Samaria?**

By Alex Nachumson

The recent relatively unprecedented approval by the Israeli government to build 900 new Palestinian homes in “Area C,” which is under IDF military and civil control, at the same time as announcing more than 2,000 Israeli homes in Judea and Samaria, is the result of at least three cases of political pressure.

The first clearly comes from the White House. Hopefully, a great reward awaits Israel in return for this move—one so far unbeknownst to the public.

Even if such a prize is on the horizon, however, this is a dangerous precedent that links Israeli and Palestinian construction at a very high ratio of around two Israeli homes for every Palestinian

home that is built in “Area C.” This area was placed under full Israeli control in the Oslo Accords, a recognized international agreement.

For years and on many occasions, Israel has struggled to prevent illegal Palestinian construction there—construction directly funded by global players like the European Union, in direct violation of the accords.

The second case likely stems from an Israeli desire to strengthen the Palestinian Authority vis-à-vis Hamas. This, too, is probably a result of American pressure and has been openly stated as a U.S. interest by the Biden administration. Here, too, the price is very high.

It should be remembered that the United States is simultaneously demanding other gestures, including a reopening of its consulate in eastern Jerusalem, which would be another very significant gift to the P.A. It would constitute a return to the pre-Trump policy of de facto dividing Jerusalem into two service areas for two populations—Jewish and Arab.

The third and arguably most critical case of political pressure is that which exists within the government. This has arisen out of a need for balance between right and left in the coalition, and to ensure its survival at all costs, especially in the critical days ahead of the approval of the budget.

Let one imagine that the reward for the above pressure will have been worth it—particularly as Israel engages in an almost daily battle with Iran and its proxies, such as Hezbollah—a U.S. State Department spokesman announced on Friday that approving the construction of thousands of housing units in Jewish towns and cities in Judea and Samaria “fundamentally undercut[s] efforts to advance a negotiated two-state solution.”

This predictable and rote announcement possibly contradicts the assumption that there is a deal behind the scenes that provides Israel with a significant reward in return for its precious tribute to the P.A.

Otherwise, why would the State Department express dissatisfaction? It is possible that the White House, through the State Department, is paying lip service to those who oppose this quid pro quo, such as the E.U., Iran and the progressives in the Democratic Party?

If so, this is bad news, because it indicates that the White House is unable, or unwilling, to openly back Israel, without fear of reaction or recrimination.

Another possibility is that the Israeli government made the gesture unilaterally, without an agreement, and now finds that it did not sufficiently satisfy the White House.

The problem here might be the result of internecine strife. Perhaps Defense Minister Benny Gantz approved this decision without Prime Minister Naftali Bennett’s approval, in order to lead a policy and weaken the premier.

A third possible scenario is that Bennett consented to Gantz’s approval of Palestinian construction, so as to make him the settlers’ enemy, thus weaken his negotiations with former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to form an alternative government.

Whatever the reason, the damage has already been done, and it’s very severe. Now, anyone who wants to put pressure on Israel understands that it works.

Apart from the unprecedented nature of approving so many Palestinian homes in Area C—a prize that is crucial to the P.A.’s goal of holding onto vast swathes of Judea and Samaria—it is a display of Israeli weakness that emboldens the P.A. and international figures who seek to lessen Israel’s presence in its historic heartland, which is so important for its security.

Furthermore, it emboldens Palestinian militant aspirations and drives Israel further away from ultimate victory over violent rejectionism.

The final lines in this episode have yet to be written, but the balance of power in Judea and Samaria might already have been irrevocably broken. (JNS Aug 24)

*The writer is an IDF Military Commander (Res.) and CEO of Mivtachi Israel, an organization of former senior IDF officers.*

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## Has Biden Anything to Offer Bennett But More Trouble?

By Jonathan S. Tobin

In theory, the planned meeting this week between Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and President Joe Biden ought to be exactly what both men need. As a neophyte leader, Bennett—whose unstable, multi-ideological coalition maintains only a precarious hold on power in the Knesset—very much wants to be seen interacting with other leaders on the world stage and showing that he has a good working relationship with his country’s sole superpower ally.

Bennett is also hoping that Biden will be willing to at least act as if he is listening to the Jewish state’s concerns about Iran. More than

that, he’s hoping that the U.S. president will avoid any rhetoric or action that makes the Israeli look weak to his critics back home. At best, he’s hoping to emerge with some kind of show that will allow both governments to at least pretend that the Afghanistan debacle hasn’t undermined confidence in America’s willingness to back up its allies.

The administration could use a momentary distraction that Biden’s meeting with the head of Israel’s first post-Netanyahu government will provide from the widespread condemnation his feckless retreat from Afghanistan earned him.

Biden presented himself to the nation as an experienced foreign-policy hand who would restore the trust that he claimed was squandered by former President Donald Trump. But the Afghanistan disaster demonstrated that his claims to being more competent, empathetic and honest than his predecessor were dubious at best. His erstwhile loyal mainstream media allies are beginning to question him in a way that he has not experienced since becoming his party’s presidential nominee. Even many Democrats are starting to acknowledge that while they’d like to spend the next three years blaming the country’s problems (including a resurgent coronavirus pandemic) on Trump, they own them now.

The arrival of the head of a government that Biden clearly wishes to bolster—lest American moves contribute to its fall and the potential return of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to power—can’t hurt. Any White House messaging that will at least partially counter the bad Afghanistan optics and demonstrate his friendship with America’s sole democratic ally in the Middle East is clearly in Biden’s interest.

But Bennett and his team should not be laboring under the delusion that this meeting means as much to Biden as it does to them. A few photos and some friendly conversation with an Israeli most Americans neither know nor care much about isn’t going to help a president facing a crisis of confidence.

As important as the U.S.-Israel relationship can seem to be, there are times when it must be acknowledged that an American president has more important things to worry about than the alliance with the Jewish state.

Biden’s foreign-policy team also has no incentive to give a right-winger like Bennett a boost, even if his government also contains parties whose views are viewed with more favor by the American establishment. They are happy to be rid of Netanyahu and would like his ouster to be permanent. Still, they are not so desirous of that outcome that they would consider giving Bennett the sort of policy victories that would enable him to demonstrate that he is doing a better job in Washington than his predecessor.

That presents Bennett with an almost impossible task.

Bennett will tell Biden that the Iran policy he has been pursuing is not only wrongheaded but at this point, utterly irrelevant to the challenge that Tehran presents to the rest of the world. Reviving the 2015 nuclear deal that former President Barack Obama struck with them has been Biden’s priority. The Iranians have done so much cheating and have exploited its loose provisions to the point where it can no longer be argued that it keeps them from crossing the nuclear threshold. That’s true even if one ignores the sunset provisions that will expire at the end of the decade, which will give them a legal path to a nuclear weapon.

What Bennett wants is to begin discussions about a joint effort to confront Iran. The Israelis want to persuade Biden to avoid giving away the store in the ongoing talks with the Iranians in Vienna and, by a combination of sanctions and strengthened Middle East alliances, give Iran a reason to start backing down.

With respect to the Palestinians, unlike Obama and even Trump, Biden seems to understand that the peace process is dead in the water, and another attempt at reviving it will only make things worse. Even on that front, Bennett senses danger. He wants Biden to give up plans to reopen a U.S. consulate in Jerusalem that would, in effect, serve, as it did before Trump’s recognition of Israel’s capital, as an American embassy to the Palestinians. At the very least, he wants that affront to Israeli sovereignty to be put off until after Bennett’s government can pass a budget and be assured of continued life into 2022.

He might get such a postponement, though Bennett is likely to walk away from the meeting with little else of value. All he can hope for is whatever political benefit he gets from being treated as a world leader, rather than the head of a small ideological faction who was only elevated to power by a once-in-a-lifetime twist of fate enabled by Netanyahu’s hubris.

Unfortunately for both Israel and Bennett, there is no evidence that Biden is drawing sensible conclusions from the diplomatic stalemate with Iran in Vienna. To the contrary, as with the almost

perverse stubbornness he showed with respect to his belief that Afghanistan must be fled before he had secured the exit of both Americans and Afghan allies, in addition to the treasure trove of U.S. military equipment he left behind, Biden is likely to double down on whatever foolish concept is already stuck inside his head. That means sticking with an effort to appease Iran long after it stopped making sense from even the perspective of the original nuclear deal.

Nor is Biden likely to embrace the opportunity for building on Trump's achievement with respect to the Abraham Accords, as the Israelis hope. Biden and his advisers are still committed to the myth that a peace that the Palestinians don't want is the key to a successful Middle Eastern policy. The idea of doing anything more than tolerating the alliances being built between Israel and the Gulf states, as well as a Saudi government that Biden's team deplores—let alone aiding them to oppose Iran—remains anathema to them.

That leaves Israel and its new Arab partners effectively on their own, especially now that they've seen how little Biden cares about the sensibilities or the safety of allies. Bennett must accept that he is not going to get any help from Biden in taking the actions that he knows are necessary, even if many in his coalition think differently. That's especially true at a moment when Iran is encouraging Hamas to heat up the border with Gaza and other provocations.

Bennett is currently being blamed by his opponents on the right for his caution in dealing with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, despite the fact that he's doing almost nothing differently than Netanyahu would if he were still in power. But unlike a known quantity like his former chief, Bennett is likely to be tested by Israel's enemies in the coming months. Even if he proves equal to that test, as all who care about Israel must hope he does, he's going to need some help from the Americans or at least count on them not to undermine him. Nevertheless, anything more than a photo op and a friendly handshake from a president with bigger problems and higher priorities than Israel's security is highly unlikely. (JNS Aug 23)

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#### **Bennett can't have it Both Ways with Biden** By Ruthie Blum

It's hard to figure out what Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett meant when he told his Cabinet on Sunday that in his upcoming visit to the White House, he intends to present U.S. President Joe Biden with an "orderly plan that we have formulated in the past two months to curb the Iranians, both in the nuclear sphere and vis-à-vis regional aggression."

After all, Israel has been leading the battle against the regime in Tehran for decades, ever since it was taken over by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979. This fight hasn't been merely rhetorical, though former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu devoted much of his career articulating, verbally and in print, the dangers that a nuclear Iran would pose to the Middle East and the rest of the world.

He understood, as Bennett surely does, that since the Jewish state is a key target of the mullahs' genocidal aims against the "infidels," Israel has had no choice but to try to persuade other countries to wake up to the threat—or go it alone.

Some American administrations have recognized this more than others; the same applies to different constellations of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

It hasn't been a question of accepting Israel's warnings about Iran. Rather, it's been an issue of how best to keep the Islamic Republic's race for the A-bomb in check.

Left-wing politicians and pundits from both the "Great Satan" (America) and the "Small Satan" (Israel), tend to believe that the only way to do this is through a deal. Those on the right think that negotiating with a state sponsor of global terrorism is as pointless as doing so with its proxies, which happily dispatch "martyrs" to undertake the up-close-and-personal dirty work. You know, the kind that enables them to watch the blood and gore that they extract from their victims.

When Biden's immediate predecessor and former boss, President Barack Obama, entered the picture, Israel was in trouble. Fans of the "hope and change" candidate on either side of the ocean would come very quickly to attribute the soured relations between Washington and Jerusalem to Netanyahu.

They were wrong to do so.

Indeed, it wasn't Bibi who caused the rift. It was Obama who made no bones about wanting to loosen traditional American ties with Israel. As comedian Jay Leno quipped in 2014: "Obama knows just how unbreakable the U.S.-Israel bond is, since he's been trying to break it for years."

Leno may have been joking, but Obama's announcement to a select group of Jewish leaders in July 2009 was no laughing matter.

"Look at the past eight years," said Obama, referring to the presidency of George W. Bush. "During those eight years, there was no space between us and Israel, and what did we get from that? When there is no daylight, Israel just sits on the sidelines, and that erodes our credibility with the Arab states."

Never mind that just the opposite happened after Obama completed his two terms, and Donald Trump was elected to succeed him.

Forget about the Abraham Accords, which came about precisely as a result of the Trump administration's tough stance towards Iran and warm embrace of Israel. Leave aside hindsight for a moment and focus only on Obama's worldview, which included a deep conviction that America was not superior to any other country, and that it was his job to "lead from behind" in the pursuit of peace and stability.

The chaos that ensued at home and abroad is well-documented, as are Netanyahu's repeated warnings against an agreement with the mullahs that would not only enable them to keep their centrifuges spinning, but would be useless where halting their other nefarious activities around the world was concerned.

In a last-ditch effort to get this point across ahead of the signing of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Netanyahu—at the invitation of then-House Speaker John Boehner—addressed a joint session of Congress on March 3, 2015. Obama was so furious about it that he didn't attend. Other members of the Democratic Party also boycotted the event.

In other words, any "wedge" between the aisles on Capitol Hill was already there, and it stemmed in this case from Tehran, not Jerusalem. The ayatollahs seemed to grasp this better than the Israeli and American politicians bent on blaming Bibi.

Ironically, Netanyahu won a landslide electoral victory 12 days later despite the polls and pontifications of his detractors that his speech, as well as the chutzpah that it took for him to deliver it against Obama's wishes, was going to cost him dearly in the form of a humiliating defeat.

What his oratory didn't succeed in doing, however, was to alter the process leading up to July 15—a mere two-and-half-months later—when the JCPOA became a done deal; a disastrous one, to boot.

Adding credence to Netanyahu's unheeded admonitions, within months, Iran test-fired long-range rockets—one of which had the Hebrew message "Israel must be wiped out" etched on its frame. Soon after that, its military used a Star of David as a target for testing a medium-range ballistic missile.

Until Trump took the reins in the Oval Office, Netanyahu was forced to fly solo, so to speak. This involved conducting covert operations against Iranian facilities through cyber and other attacks within the Islamic Republic itself and elsewhere, such as Syria.

It was one such secret mission—the Mossad theft of a trove of nuclear documents from a warehouse in Tehran—that provided Trump with the ultimate concrete evidence of Iranian violations of the JCPOA. On that basis, he ripped up the deal.

Meanwhile, he and Netanyahu managed to forge a coalition of anti-Iran Arab states that resulted in the above-mentioned Abraham Accords between Israel and previously hostile neighboring nations.

Since then, much has transpired to upstage the monumental achievement. In swift succession, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged; Trump was replaced by Biden; and Bennett unseated Netanyahu.

Bennett used to know—and not only deep down—that the Democrats have been growing more radical with each passing year, culminating in the party's constant catering to its radical wing.

As soon as he was inaugurated, however, he began to talk like his foreign minister, Yair Lapid, who is scheduled to rotate with him in two years for the premiership. Unlike Bennett, Lapid has always held that enemies need to be negotiated with to keep them at bay. He's also been a firm believer that Netanyahu damaged U.S.-Israel relations.

Neither position is true, as the "old Bennett" would have been the first to attest.

It's hard to tell, then, how he's able even to entertain the fantasy that his meeting with Biden on Thursday will bear any fruit other than a photo op. There's nothing he can say about Iran that the U.S. president hasn't heard and rejected before, when Netanyahu uttered them.

More importantly, Bennett is going to have to face the reality that he can't have it both ways. Remaining true to Israeli interests and building imaginary "bridges" with an administration seeking to return to the JCPOA—while pushing for harmful policies in relation to the Palestinians—is simply a contradiction in terms. (JNS Aug 24)

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