SURVIVING OBAMA

Bloomberg columnist Jeffrey Goldberg minced few words in discussing the interview that US President Barack Hussein Obama gave him on the eve of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's latest visit to Washington.

Speaking with journalist Charlie Rose, Goldberg equated Obama's threat to stop supporting Israel in international forums to the talk of a mafia don. Obama told Goldberg that if Israel doesn't cut a deal with the Palestinians soon, "our ability to manage the international fallout is going to be limited." He added, "And that has consequences."

Obama's statement, Goldberg noted, was a "veiled threat" and "almost up there with, *'Nice little Jewish state you've got there. Hate to see something happen to it.'*" Goldberg saw the interview as Obama's way of showing that he is beginning to abandon the pretense of supporting Israel, now that he no longer faces reelection. In Goldberg's words, "It's not that the gloves are coming off. It's more that the mask of diplomatic language is coming off."

Goldberg added that due to the fact that Obama "doesn't have to run again for anything," he doesn't need to pretend feelings for Israel that he doesn't have, by among other things, going to the AIPAC annual policy conference.

And indeed, Obama has achieved a comfort level with implementing anti-Israel policies. His threat to step aside and let Israel-haters have their way in places like the United Nations or in certain quarters of Europe is of a piece with several steps the he is already reportedly undertaking to harm Israel in various ways.

Before he was reelected in 2012, Obama felt it necessary to align his policies on Iran to the preferences of the US public. And as a consequence, although he voiced harsh criticism of congressional sanctions bills against Iran, he grudgingly signed them into law. He then proceeded to use the sanctions he opposed but signed as proof that he supported Israel in speeches before Jewish audiences.

Now that he no longer has to concern himself with the wishes of the American public and its representatives in Congress, Obama has dropped the mask of opposition to Iran and forged ahead with a diplomatic process that all but ensures Iran will acquire nuclear weapons.

The same is apparently the case with joint US-Israeli missile defense programs. Last week (3/05), it was reported that the administration has slashed funding of those programs by two-thirds for the 2015 fiscal year. Obama touted his previous willingness to fully fund those programs - manifested in his decision not to veto congressional appropriations, despite his stated desire to slash funding - as proof of his administration's "unprecedented" security cooperation with Israel.

Then there are the low-level bureaucratic sanctions that Obama began enacting against Israel last year. These involve State Department activities that are not subject to easy congressional oversight.

For instance, on Sunday (3/09) Breitbart reported that the State Department has drastically decreased the number of Israeli tourist visa applications it approved. The rise in rejection rates has prevented Israel from participating in the visa waiver program. And further, the State Department rejected hundreds of visa requests from members of Israel's security services.

Israeli Foreign Ministry officials told me they believe this is a deliberate, premeditated policy.

Although White House spokesman Jay Carney was quick to claim that Israel's interception of the Iranian missile ship en route to Gaza last Wednesday (3/05) was the result of US-Israeli intelligence cooperation, the fact is that the US continues to undermine Israel's covert operations in Iran. Earlier this week, CBS reported that the Obama administration has demanded that Israel stop its reported covert campaign to kill Iranian nuclear scientists in order to delay or block Iran's nuclear progress.

Obama's new willingness to threaten Israel and to take the actions he feels it is safe to take to downgrade Israel's relations with the US will likely only grow after November's midterm elections. After the congressional elections, Obama will feel entirely free to attack the US's closest ally in the Middle East.

So what can Israel do? How can Israel safeguard its interests at a time when the US president publicly trashes and threatens those interests and privately undermines them? Israel already did the most important thing in this regard when voters reelected Netanyahu to lead the government last year. During his trip to the US this week, Netanyahu made clear that he understands the challenge and is competent to handle it.

Since Netanyahu returned to the premiership in January 2009, he has implemented a policy of waiting Obama out. Over the past five years, the prime minister has only directly challenged Obama when he had no choice. And that has been the right course. Little good comes to Israel from open fights with the White House. Such fights should only be engaged when the consequences of having a fight are less bad than the consequences of not fighting.

In his speech at the AIPAC Conference last Tuesday (3/04), Netanyahu rebutted every position Obama has staked out on the Palestinians and Iran without ever mentioning Obama's name. By doing so he energized Israel's supporters while denying Obama the ability to claim that Netanyahu is unsupportive of his policies.

In other words, he humored the White House while staking out an independent Israeli policy for which he secured the support of Israel's American backers.

But Netanyahu's skill in maneuvering around Obama is not enough for Israel to safely weather his presidency. Israel needs an overall strategy for securing its interests.

Such a multi-pronged strategy begins with Iran. Here is *Priority #1: Israel needs to directly attack Iran's nuclear installations - by covert action as well as through overt military strikes, as required*.

According to CBS, after Obama's diplomatic capitulation to Iran became public, Netanyahu ordered Israel's intelligence services to concentrate their efforts in Iran on exposing the fraudulence of Iran's purported commitment to freezing its nuclear progress. But while this is important, exposing Iran's duplicity is not nearly as important as incapacitating Iran's nuclear sites.

With Obama now joining Secretary of State John Kerry in openly threatening to passively support a European trade war against Israel, it is imperative that Israel develop every economic opportunity it has to expand its markets. As Netanyahu made clear in his speech to AIPAC, Israel's technological prowess has already made it a magnet for global investors. But these opportunities should be maximized through further economic liberalization.

In a conversation with Haaretz (3/05) while attending AIPAC, Texas Republican Sen. Ted Cruz noted that "President Obama has been the president most hostile to the nation of Israel in modern times."

In a conversation with me, Cruz placed the blame for Obama's success in implementing his anti-Israel policies on the Senate Democrats, led by Majority Leader Henry Reid.

In his words, "The challenge we are facing is that the number one protector of Obama's foreign policy has been Harry Reid and the Senate Democrats."

On the sidelines of the AIPAC conference, Cruz blasted the hypocrisy of Senate Democrats. "At the same time they block the Kirk-Menendez sanctions [bill against Iran] and blame Israel for the impasse in peace negotiations, they proclaim their support for Israel," he said.

And Cruz is certainly correct.

There can be no doubt that Israel's strongest supporters today are in the Republican Party.

But it is important to remember that most Democrats also support Israel. They are simply unable politically to withstand the pressures that Obama has brought to bear to force them to stand with him against Israel.

In his speech to AIPAC, Democrat Sen. Robert Menendez, who chairs the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee confessed that he was forced to stand down on Iran sanctions due to partisan pressure.

In his words, "When it comes to Iran, I have stood with you and have stood against so many in my own party."

Menendez's admission that he couldn't withstand the pressures that Obama and Reid brought to bear against him indicates that among some Democrats, support for Israel remains strong, but that under Obama, Israel's Democrat supporters are weak.

While deeply problematic, this is a problem with a limited shelf-life.

If Obama views the midterm elections as the final restraint on his ability to act against the will of the American public, his fellow Democrats likely view the elections as the last time Obama will serve as the head of their party during an election cycle. In the 2016 elections, the Democrat presidential nominee will set the tone for the party, not Obama.

Moreover, as the full economic impacts of Obamacare, Obama's signature domestic policy, become known after the midterm elections, Obama will be even more severely weakened. Consequently, his ability to pressure his Democrat colleagues to toe his line will be diminished.

Finally, given Obama's obsessive focus on demanding that Israel surrender its land to the Palestinians, it is imperative that Israel develop a strategy for waiting Obama out on this issue.

Obama told Goldberg that Israel must surrender to the Palestinians forthwith, because it has no other option. In his words, "I have not yet heard... a persuasive vision of how Israel survives as a democracy and a Jewish state at peace with its neighbors in the absence of a peace deal with the Palestinians and a two-state solution."

Mr. Obama needs to read my book, The Israeli Solution: A One-State Plan for Peace in the Middle East. Israel does have a viable alternative. It involves applying Israeli law to all of Judea and Samaria and integrating the Palestinians into Israeli society.

Israel would not be endangered demographically or democratically if it adopted this approach, and it would certainly be better off militarily.

Netanyahu has stated his support for establishing a Palestinian state. But he has made clear that he will only agree to a peace deal that protects Israel's vital interests.

While maintaining faith with that position, it would be prudent for him to discuss publicly and at length the fact while a negotiated peace is his preference, there is a fine alternative to a Palestinian terror state in Israel's strategic and historic heartland.

If the Palestinians are uninterested in negotiating a viable agreement with Israel, then Israel will

feel free to adopt an alternative course of applying its laws to Judea and Samaria.

At a minimum, such a move by Netanyahu would discredit and end *Obama's demographic threats, which are based on falsified Palestinian census data*. It would place pressure on the Palestinians to show their hand - either embracing peace in a genuine manner, or demonstrating the basic falsity of their protestations of peaceful intentions. Either way, Israel would be better off.

Obama's newfound courage to begin abandoning his pretense of supporting Israel presents Israel with a new challenge. But it is far from insurmountable. With the proper mix of policies, Israel can absorb Obama's blows and even to blunt them, as Obama becomes an independent, unrestrained, and weak lame duck president.

Caroline Glick is Deputy Managing Editor of the Jerusalem Post. Her new book, The Israeli Solution: A One State Plan for Peace in the Middle East, *was released on March 4.*

Discuss this item on the forums. Click Here!