



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*

What Dubai Taught Me About Israel

By David M.
Weinberg

In my wildest dreams, I never imagined lighting a menorah in the United Arab Emirates on the eighth day of Hanukkah. Nor had I

contemplated saying Kaddish for my father on his 14th yearzeit last week in the desert dunes on the periphery of Dubai. (My father would have been amused and excited about both moments, I think.)

And yet, there I was in an Arab country, newly at peace with Israel, on Hanukkah—the holiday of Jewish spiritual resistance and military victory. Amazingly, there was no reason to hide my Jewish religious affiliation or my national citizenship as an Israeli. Just the opposite was true. Everyone in Dubai was thrilled to meet a religious Jew and a real Israeli. Emiratis are proud to be associated with us.

(I was in the United Arab Emirates to teach Torah and strategic affairs on behalf of koshertravelers.com, for visiting Jews from around the world. Last week, there was more Hebrew than Arabic heard in the streets of Dubai!)

To tell you the truth, at first I was put off by the seemingly preening skyscrapers of modern Dubai. Every guide boasts that the Burj Khalifa is the tallest building in the world. This reminds me of the Tower of Babel, of which God did not approve. "And they said: 'Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven, and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth'" (Genesis 11:4). And indeed, God then scattered mankind upon the whole face of the earth, to curb the arrogance.

But then I learned from Emiratis to see their tall towers differently. They do not mean to lord it over others or express conceit. They mean to say: We are a forward-looking nation.

They mean to say: We are secure in our heritage and confident about our abilities to contribute to the world. We are big, powerful and wealthy enough to be educated, generous and tolerant.

The Emiratis do not bemoan colonialism in their past. They do not wall about anti-Arab discrimination, nor do they blame others or seek scapegoats.

For an Israeli, this is so refreshing! Alas, so many Arab countries keep their people in the dark ages, and wallow in negativity. We have gotten used to nothing but self-pity and bitterness from many of Israel's Arab neighbors, along with complaints, false allegations, vituperation and other attacks against Israel.

The Emiratis see no need to buy into anti-Jewish conspiracy theories like "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," or nefarious tales about Jerusalem controlling Washington. Again, just the opposite is true. They believe in hard work and in using one's riches (be they intellectual or other) for the betterment of one's own people. From this perspective, cooperation with Israel is a win-win situation for the Emiratis.

Of course, the Emiratis do not have a border dispute with Israel, and they have enough money to both help the Palestinians move into the 21st century (if the Palestinians are willing to be helped) and to invest together with Israel in technologies and educational ventures that drive towards the 22nd century.

Nevertheless, the Emirati perspective is clear and edifying: They see Israel as a force for good in the world.

In attempting to drill down into the Emirati mind as to why they see Israel so, I discovered that this goes way beyond Israel's economic and technological success, and even beyond Israel's military prowess.

It is certainly true that Emiratis respect Israel's strength. Not only has Israel shown the grit and resilience to overcome the big armies of yesteryear—the armies of Egypt, Syria and Iraq—but it is the only country in the world fighting Iranian troops on the ground and repelling the Iranian drive for regional hegemony. The Israel Defense Forces and the Mossad are battling the armies, the Shi'ite militias, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards of Iran, in Lebanon and Syria, and reportedly in Iraq and Iran, and probably elsewhere too.

Thus, the Emiratis see Israelis as "Maccabees" of old, fighting valiantly for their homeland; as a minority beating majority forces of evil. Just like it says in the Al HaNissim prayer for Hanukkah: "The Almighty delivered the mighty in the hands of the weak," as it were.

But there is more. As I read them, the Emiratis also respect Israelis for their faithfulness to Jewish tradition, for their belief in the power of Jewish history, for their loyalty to ancient heritage and unique national identity. Believe it or not, the Emiratis seem to

Commentary...

First, Listen to Iran's Foreign Minister

By Ayelet Savyon, Yigal Carmon and Ze'ev B. Begin

"Seven times did the wolf tell the lamb stop. And only then devoured."

—Natan Zach, "Failure"

A few days ago, on Dec. 14, a bipartisan group of some 50 people, all former high-ranking security and foreign affairs officials in previous U.S. administrations, publicly called upon President-elect Joe Biden to act swiftly in the matter of Iran: "On day one, [President Biden] could announce his intention to re-enter the [2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] agreement, suggesting a step-by-step process for full sanctions relief that is synchronized with Iran's return to full compliance."

While acknowledging that "the conventional arms race, including ballistic and cruise missiles and drones, raises tensions and instability in the region and undermines deterrence," the group argued that "with the JCPOA reinvigorated by Iran and the U.S., the hard work can begin on regional arms limitations and provide a foundation from which to resolve regional differences and explore regional cooperation."

This bold call for action came against the backdrop of the growing European distrust of Iran and awareness of the JCPOA's dangerous omission of the issues of Iran's aggressive activity across the Middle East, including by arming its proxies with rockets and missiles. This activity cannot be separated from Iran's quest for nuclear weapons because a nuclear bomb needs a delivery system. The recent success of the Iranian space launch vehicle has proven that Iran is capable of building rockets with a very long range.

The proposal to first lift sanctions on Iran and then expect it to limit its missile industry may be an attractive topic at a foreign relations seminar, but for a dose of reality it is advisable to first listen to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who in a Dec. 9 interview was very clear:

"Mr. Biden's government officials know that the subjects that do not appear in the JCPOA are not absent by accident, but rather by decision. This means that we have debated the subject of the missiles. When they raised the issue of our missiles, we said: 'What do you have to say about the weapons that Israel or Saudi Arabia possess? Are you saying that Iran should be denied its defensive capabilities? Do you have the right to do that?' When they raised the issue of our regional [involvement], we said: 'What do you have to say about Israel?' And they responded: 'We want to repair your relations with the region.' We said: 'Repair your own relations with the region.'"

And more: "America is in no position to set conditions for its return [to the JCPOA], or for the restoration of its rights when it comes to the JCPOA's implementation. ... So, if the [missiles and regional intervention] do not appear in the JCPOA, it's because they compromised on these issues. They failed to put them in the JCPOA. They do not have that option. They are the ones who owe us, because of their policies of arming [others] and their policies in the region."

The game is always the same—the aggressor persuades the threatened party it has the higher moral ground. Iran's blatantly expansionist ideology—its leaders proclaim that Iran is now in "the second phase of the Islamic Revolution"—has been replaced by these leaders' claim that Iran is actually the Middle East lamb that must act in self-defense.

Zarif's recent exposure of the Western democracies' moral weakness in the negotiations for the JCPOA is a timely wake-up call. For the United States to take this group's advice and lift the sanctions on Iran while disregarding Iran's regional aggression and missile development would be dangerously reckless. (JNS/MEMRI Dec 22)
Ayelet Savyon is director of the MEMRI Iran Media Project; Yigal Carmon is MEMRI president and founder; Ze'ev B. Begin is a former Israeli cabinet minister.

understand—perhaps better than we do ourselves, sometimes—that these anchors of identity are the greatest source of strength and authenticity.

Indeed, the Emiratis see themselves similarly: As a people and a country that successfully blends ancient tradition, culture and ethnic identity with modern progress and ambition.

This reminds me of a central theme taught by the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. He was absolutely convinced that non-Jews most respect Jews who are self-respecting.

He meant that Jews who are knowledgeable of Judaism, proud to carry its banners and conspicuous about doing so gain the admiration of non-Jews. On the other hand, ambivalent, embarrassed and ignorant Jews elicit scorn or worse, in addition to condemning themselves to identity oblivion.

I see that the same principle applies to Zionist belief and the defense of Israel. Non-Jews most respect Jews who are unapologetically self-respecting in their Zionism, and see in their Zionism an opportunity for the Jewish People from the Land of Israel to contribute to the world.

It is ironic and thrilling at the same time that it took a week in Dubai (of all places!) on Hanukkah (of all Jewish holidays!) to remind me of this truism: That Israel is admired when it is strong and believing. (Israel Hayom Dec 23)

Dennis Ross is the Wrong Choice for Ambassador to Israel

By Stephen M. Flatow

A diplomat who has devoted most of his career to pressuring Israel for one-sided concessions to the Palestinians should not serve as the U.S. ambassador to Israel. That's why I'm deeply concerned by reports that Dennis Ross is under consideration by Joe Biden for that position.

Ross began his involvement in Mideast affairs as head of the State Department Policy Planning unit that crafted the policies implemented by James A. Baker, the most anti-Israel Secretary of State in American history.

In 1991, *Moment* magazine dubbed Ross and his colleagues "the Jewish Arabists." Israeli diplomats have described how they sometimes used their Jewish identity as a kind of cover for their harsh treatment of Israel, pointing to the fact that they are Jewish as "proof" that they couldn't possibly be unfair to Israel.

But the policies that Ross, et al, conceived for the Bush-Baker administration spoke for themselves, including:

- The 18 months of "dialogue" with Yasser Arafat in 1989-1990, during which President George H. W. Bush and Secretary Baker refused to acknowledge PLO terrorist attacks, lest they be forced to cut off relations with Arafat.
- Baker's constant public criticism of Israel and unrelenting pressure to halt all Jewish housing in much of Jerusalem, as well as Judea-Samaria.
- The infamous vulgarity that Baker uttered against Jews. Baker denied he said it, but the source turned out to be unimpeachable: cabinet member Jack Kemp. (In any event, Baker's profanity obviously mirrored his policies towards Israel and Jews.)
- Bush's notorious outburst about how he was "one lonely little guy" under siege by "powerful" Jewish lobbyists who were swarming Washington in support of humanitarian loan guarantees for Israel. AIPAC's executive director called it a "day of infamy." That was putting it mildly, to judge by the anti-Semitic messages of support that flooded the White House switchboard.
- The United States promise to support Israeli military action if Israel was attacked by Iraq, followed by the brutal American pressure on Israel not to strike back as Saddam's Scud missiles rained down on Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Along the way, Bush was succeeded by Bill Clinton, yet Ross and his colleagues remained in their jobs and their bias took on new forms:

- The refusal to ever criticize Arafat and the Palestinian Authority for their constant violations of the Oslo accords.
- The refusal to extradite even one of the many Palestinian Arabs involved in the murders of American citizens.
- The grotesque attempt to orchestrate a propaganda visit by Arafat to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

When Barack Obama became president and Hillary Clinton became secretary of state, Ross had a new channel for his advancing his old agenda. As a senior aide to Secretary Clinton, Ross undertook one of the most troubling anti-Israel actions in the history of American foreign policy: pressuring Israel to let Hamas bring concrete into Gaza.

Writing in *The Washington Post* on Aug. 8, 2014—years after he did the damage—Ross wrote: "I argued with Israeli leaders and security officials, telling them they needed to allow more construction materials, including cement, into Gaza so that housing, schools and basic infrastructure could be built. They countered that Hamas would misuse it, and they were right."

Thanks to Ross's pressure, Hamas built "a labyrinth of underground tunnels, bunkers, command posts and shelters for its leaders, fighters and rockets," acknowledged Ross. They built the tunnels with "an estimated 600,000 tons of cement," some of which was "diverted from construction materials allowed into Gaza."

That's not the only colossal mistake Ross has made—and admitted—that has had life-and-death consequences for Israel.

Writing in the journal *Foreign Policy* on Jan. 2, 2018, here's what Ross confessed concerning the Obama administration's policy towards anti-government protests in Iran:

"In June 2009, I was serving in President Barack Obama's administration as the secretary of state's special advisor on Iran and was part of the decision-making process. Because we feared playing into the hands of the regime and lending credence to its claim that the demonstrations were being instigated from the outside, we adopted a low-key posture. In retrospect, that was a mistake. We should have shined a spotlight on what the regime was doing and mobilized our allies to do the same."

Well, isn't that simply great? Six years after he put tunnels-grade concrete in the hands of Hamas and eight years after abandoning the forces who could have overthrown the genocidal Iranian regime, Dennis Ross says, "Oops!" And Israel is left to deal with the consequences: terror tunnels throughout Gaza and an Iran that is building nuclear weapons to incinerate the Jewish state.

The U.S. ambassador to Israel does not just convey messages from Washington or attend ceremonies. He is actively involved in shaping and implementing American policy towards the Jewish state. Dennis Ross's decades-long record of actions that have been harmful to Israel should disqualify him from consideration for that position. (JNS Dec 21)

Curb this Terror Wave in Israel Before it Swells By Yoav Limor

2020, which was a good year in terms of the war on terror, is winding down to an end with a bright, flashing warning: The murder of Esther Horgen and the terrorist attack in Jerusalem on Monday could indicate an impending terrorist wave.

Based on past experience, it's safe to assume that Horgen's murderer will be captured quickly. It doesn't seem to have been a planned attack, certainly not organized by a terrorist cell; rather, it was more likely a spur-of-the-moment act of opportunity. It's even possible it began as a criminal attack, which turned into a brutal murder. History is also full of many such events, the last of which was the horrific murder of Ori Ansbacher nearly two years ago near Jerusalem.

Those who commit these atrocities have a clear interest in having them labeled terrorist attacks rather than murders, and being labeled terrorists rather than murderers. Either way, they will receive life sentences, but attaining terrorist status has dramatic implications: On the Palestinian street they will be perceived as heroes, receive fanfare and funding from the Palestinian Authority and a bevy of other charity associations. Therefore, we can assume that when Horgen's murderer is caught, he will claim that he was nationalistically motivated. And he will likely pin the awful brutality of his murder on the same excuse.

Horgen was the third person killed in terrorist attacks in 2020. This is a drop compared to the last two years—nine killed in 2019 (seven civilians and two members of the security forces) and 16 people killed in 2018 (nine civilians and seven members of the security forces). The drop is partly attributed to successful preventative measures implemented by the Israel Defense Forces and Shin Bet, but also to the coronavirus pandemic.

The P.A. has been largely locked down since March. Many people have been stuck at home, unnerved, while certainly avoiding contact with others. In Palestinian villages, Tanzim patrols ensure that lockdown measures are being meticulously observed and that Palestinians are not crossing into Israeli areas unchecked.

Under these circumstances, any unnecessary movement is considered suspicious, and terrorists have struggled to operate. The IDF and Shin Bet have exploited this, and—after a short period of freezing counter-terrorist activities when the pandemic first erupted (save for imperative operations in extraordinary cases)—have used

the situation to hit terrorist networks hard.

This has contributed to the low figures, but it has changed nothing in terms of motivation. Both organized terrorists—specifically guided by Hamas in Gaza—and localized cells, continue to plot attacks. As always, “lone-wolf” terrorists who act independently are also a constant concern. The murder of Horgen, it appears, was perpetrated by one of these lone-wolf terrorists, unlike the shooting attack in Jerusalem’s Old City later on Monday.

Israel’s security forces now must focus on two objectives. First, the terrorists behind both attacks on Monday must be apprehended before they act again (in the case of the Jerusalem cell, it is clearly armed and dangerous). Second, the security forces must nip in the bud any potential wave of copycat terrorism inspired by these attacks. The main challenge right now is to curb this wave before it swells. (Israel Hayom Dec 22)

Israel’s Left Lost the Public’s Trust By Dan Schueftan

The Israeli public has already made its voice clear: It wants the right in power. While many right-wingers and centrists don’t give high marks to the Likud, they are not going to vote for left-wing parties but rather for other parties in the same ideological camp, including many who wrongly claim that Israel’s democracy is under threat. In light of the fact that the right’s base of support is actually centrist, the polls show only one clear thing: The left’s appeal has been shrinking.

There used to be a time when parties tried to cast themselves as something they are not. The precursor to the Labor Party, Mapai, used to be a centrist party during the pre-statehood period and definitely during the 1960s and 1970s, both on socioeconomic matters and on national security and foreign policy. But it cast itself as a socialist party in order to set itself apart from the right, which it often portrayed as fascist and whose urbanites it mocked.

In these historical circumstances, the right was an outcast among those who saw themselves as champions of freedom and democracy. In other words, the center cast itself as left, whereas the right was relegated to fringe status.

These days the situation is reversed: Those who want to win over the core of the Israeli electorate go out of their way to make sure they are not perceived as leftists. The left is automatically suspect—and rightly so—as being reluctant to embrace Israel’s Jewish character and Zionist goals.

One of its slogans—“to be free in our land”—has shed “a people” from the original phrase, taken from the national anthem. Left-wingers also keep calling for “total equality” for Israeli Arabs under the Declaration of Independence and dilute the very premise of a Jewish state on which Israel was established.

Even the non-radicals on the left have lost the public’s trust due to their irresponsible conduct during the 1990s, and have still refused to concede that the Oslo Accords were flawed. When you preach some abstract concept of “peace” to the public, most people view it as some form of deception. When people hear about “socialism” they just laugh out loud and when justices and State Attorney’s Office officials are cast as saints despite trying to impose their worldview on the public, people react with suspicion. The bottom line is that the left has no real base of support.

The right-wing base also includes hard-core, racist and dangerous elements, but it has not grown and must be isolated. Those who get the support of the suspicious right are the parties that are unabashed about Israel’s Jewish character and support national solidarity, and outright reject the Arab political leaders’ efforts to undo Israel’s identity and the Palestinian attempt to blame Israel for everything.

Those parties are the ones who do not shy away from confronting Arab-Jewish issues despite being accused of racism, and who have an unfavorable view of judges and prosecutors who use the courtroom to advance their careers. These are the parties who refuse to throw the baby out with the bathwater and embrace Israel as a whole. If the left mimics this behavior, perhaps it will one day have a shot at winning. (Israel Hayom Dec 23)

The Battle for Washington’s Foreign Policy has Begun

By Lenny Ben-David

American pundits, lobbyists and commentators are busy forecasting the Biden administration’s foreign policy and submitting names of candidates to fill positions of influence in the new government.

An outline of the new administration’s Middle East policies can already be ascertained by President-elect Joe Biden’s own decades-

long record of support for Israel. Two of his senior appointees, Secretary of State-to-be Tony Blinken and Jake Sullivan, nominated to be the National Security Advisor, also have proven track records of support. Their role in promoting the 2015 “Iran Deal” was given a fresh perspective when they condemned Iran on Dec. 14 for the abduction and execution of journalist Ruhollah Zam.

The U.S. Congress plays a significant role in Middle East policy, setting levels of financial assistance, approving arms sales, legislating sanctions and expressing the sense of Congress on myriad issues of human rights, anti-Semitism, Jerusalem and more. Regardless of the Jan. 5, 2021, Senate races in Georgia that will determine which party controls the Senate, Congress will maintain its solid bipartisan, pro-Israel reputation. For sure, strident detractors of the Jewish state will exploit the media outlets, but when all is said and done, Congress represents the pro-Israel American people. Congressional leadership from both sides of the political aisle will protect the U.S.-Israel relationship.

In recent weeks, progressive groups and think tanks have presented their own Middle East policy platforms to “take back” Washington and undo or reverse Trump policies, specifically regarding the Iranian and Palestinian issues. These groups include the International Crisis Group, the U.S. Middle East Project and the Center for a New American Security (in conjunction with the Israel Policy Forum and the Brookings Institution).

Considerable funding for these organizations’ activities, as well as those of the pro-Iran and pro-Palestinian Quincy Institute (headed by Iranian-Swiss Trita Parsi), J Street and the National Iranian American Council (NIAC), comes from the Ploughshares Fund, which ostensibly claims to be dedicated to “confront[ing] the existential threat and immorality of nuclear weapons,” but spends considerable efforts and funds to support Israel’s detractors. Ploughshares’ former president and paymaster was Joe Cirincione, who also served in executive posts in the Center for American Progress and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace as an authority on nuclear non-proliferation.

For the political observer, it is vital to survey the current broad, organized and coordinated effort to “reshape U.S. foreign policy and revive the United States’ sense of purpose in the world,” to use the words of Ben Rhodes, Barack Obama’s principal policy adviser in the White House, in a recent edition of *Foreign Affairs*.

Rhodes, who created the media “echo chamber” during the Iran deal controversy in 2015, urged one year later a “sense of urgency of radically reorienting American policy in the Middle East.”

To help meet this goal of changing U.S. policy, a group of liberal organizations has gathered a roster of 100 progressive candidates to staff senior posts in the Biden administration. “This is the first comprehensive and coordinated effort by the Left to influence the transition to appoint progressives to national security and foreign policy positions,” explained Yasmine Taeb of the Center for International Policy. Taeb is the first Muslim woman elected to the Democratic National Committee.

Among the 100 are Trita Parsi, the founder of the National Iranian American Council and a non-American; Matt Duss, foreign affairs adviser to Sen. Bernie Sanders; Sarah Leah Whitson, who headed the Human Rights Watch’s Middle East division; and Joe Cirincione, to name a few.

During the Democratic nomination process, Sanders supporters believed that they would have influence in policy-making in return for Sanders’ endorsement of Biden. “Biden has tried to appease Sanders supporters in the wake of his endorsement,” CNBC reported in April. “Biden and Sanders are forming task forces to address issues, including the economy, education, climate, criminal justice, immigration reform, and health care.”

The progressive advocates, many of whom are Obama acolytes, former administration officials or Bernie Sanders supporters, push these common themes and policies:

- Restore the nuclear “Iran Deal” and cancel sanctions against the Iranian regime.
- The assassinations of Iranian generals Qassem Soleimani and Mohsen Fakhrizade were illegal and immoral.
- The Palestinian Consulate in Washington and the American Palestinian affairs diplomatic consulate in Jerusalem should be reopened.
- The normalization agreements made between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and others are not peace agreements, but “arms sales.”
- Morocco’s normalization agreement is another case of the abandonment of the Palestinians; granting Western Sahara to Morocco is illegal.

- Israeli settlement activity, including in Jerusalem, is illegal and must be frozen.
- Israeli demolition of temporary Bedouin encampments in the West Bank is illegal.
- Aid to the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) must be resumed.
- Arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE should be blocked.

Ben Rhodes, the former National Security Advisor to President Obama, often delivers the “party line” today, as he did in his White House days, and the script is repeated in his patented “echo chamber.” The messages are re-broadcast by the following individuals and organizations:

- Tommy Vietor, who worked for President Obama for nine years, including as spokesman in Rhodes’ NSC in the White House. He is the founder of Crooked Media, where he co-hosts the Pod Save America broadcasts with Rhodes. In a recent podcast, the two condemned the killing of Mohsen Fakhriade, insisting that he was not a military officer. After the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, Vietor tweeted that he was an “Iranian political leader.”
- Rob Malley, president and CEO of the International Crisis Group (ICG) in Washington, D.C. He, too, served on the Obama National Security Council, heading its Middle East desk. He is the host of ICG’s “Hold Your Fire” podcast, where he recently disparaged the Morocco-Israel normalization agreement. “Trump’s Morocco-Israel deal means that Israel and Palestinians continue living with an unresolved conflict, and Palestinians continue living under occupation,” Malley’s Crisis Group tweeted.
- Daniel Levy, President of the U.S. Middle East Project and co-founder of J Street. He served in senior posts in the New America Foundation, The Century Foundation and the ICG. Levy is also a trustee of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. In response to the Israel-UAE normalization, Levy claimed:

“The UAE and Israel in recent years have carried out military strikes, backed or led coups and counterrevolutions, and undermined democratic transitions in the territory of at least ten other states that are recognized as members of the Arab League (Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Sudan, and Tunisia, in addition to Bahrain itself and arguably Qatar).”

- The Arab Center in Washington, D.C., is part of the Qatari Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies (ACRPS) in Doha, Qatar, headed by Azmi Bishara, a former Israeli Knesset member who fled Israel while under investigation on suspicion of spying for Hezbollah. The Center’s publications attack Saudi Arabia, Israel, Gulf States, the “Abraham Accords” and Trump’s Iran policy.

One of the biggest news frauds perpetrated recently is the “Arab Opinion Index on the Israel-Emirates Agreement,” supposedly a scientific poll, which ran in the Washington Post and tightly toed the Qatari line. The poll concluded, “The vast majority of Arabs probably oppose normalization and express a high degree of support for Palestinian statehood and rights.” The Doha-sponsored article in Washington’s premier newspaper declared:

“The UAE and Bahrain ... are among the most repressive governments in the Middle East. The UAE and Bahrain were not included in our survey, but we can get a sense of public opinion from how civil society reacted to the news of normalization.”

Beyond the Arab Center in Washington, Qatar also funds American think tanks such as the Brookings Institute and Middle East departments at U.S. universities.

Trita Parsi

Parsi’s citizenship is reported to be Iranian and Swiss. He was a founder of the National Iranian American Council (NIAC), a Washington organization accused of working for the Iranian regime. When NIAC sued a journalist for claiming that the group lobbied for Iran, a federal judge threw out the case, finding the evidence was “not inconsistent with the idea that he [Parsi] was first and foremost an advocate for the regime.” Court documents showed that Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had “worked closely with Parsi and the organization he founded.”

Parsi is the co-founder and executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a “think tank bankrolled by Charles Koch and George Soros” according to the Washington Free Beacon. A dozen Quincy Institute scholars appeared on the progressive roster of 100 candidates for Biden administration posts.

J Street

The self-proclaimed “pro-Israel, pro-peace” organization fails on both counts. Its quarterly lobbying reports filed with the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate shows J

Street’s few activities that can be categorized “pro-Israel”; maybe “even-handed” is a better term.

The agenda J Street presents in recent press releases shows its opposition to weapons for the United Arab Emirates, Israel’s new ally and Iran’s foe; its concerns over the sanctions applied to Iran; J Street’s opposition to the assassination of an Iranian nuclear “scientist,” ignoring that Fakhriadeh was a brigadier-general in the IRGC; and the organization condemned the building of a Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem, contiguous to two other Jerusalem neighborhoods. J Street seeks contiguity for Palestinians in Bethlehem (Palestinian Area A) with Israeli Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem.

J Street press releases show adherence to the progressive policies plan

Dec. 7: J Street urges senators to vote in support of four resolutions rejecting the Trump administration’s proposed sale of F-35 aircraft and other advanced weapons systems to the United Arab Emirates.

Nov. 28: in response to the Fakhriadeh assassination: “The assassination of a senior Iranian nuclear scientist appears to be an attempt to sabotage the ability of the incoming Biden administration to re-enter the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as well as the chances of further diplomacy, either by limiting the political leeway of Iranian officials who want to restore the deal, or by triggering an escalation leading to military confrontation. It seems those who oppose the JCPOA will stop at nothing to kill the agreement once and for all.”

Nov. 16: “Construction in Givat Hamatos [a neighborhood in Jerusalem] is part of a deliberate settlement movement strategy to cut off Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem from the West Bank Palestinian city of Bethlehem, in order to further undermine the prospects for a contiguous Palestinian state alongside Israel.”

Oct. 8: “The Trump administration’s decision to impose new sanctions that will sweep Iranian banks facilitating trade in medical supplies and other humanitarian goods is morally reprehensible and harms both ordinary Iranians and U.S. security interests. This is the latest misstep in the president’s belligerent anti-diplomacy campaign that has resulted in Iran being closer to a nuclear weapon, left Iranian hardliners more empowered and placed U.S. troops and allies in the region under greater threat.”

Conclusion

Progressive organizations, some with anti-Israel agendas and some even claiming to be “pro-Israel,” have embarked on a well-funded and organized campaign to turn the U.S. ship of state in a new direction, one that re-embraces Iran and the Palestinians while distancing from Israel and Arab states that seek to normalize relations with Israel.

The campaign will fail.

Even during eight years of a progressive-leaning Democratic presidency between 2001 and 2009, the left’s agenda was unsuccessful. Certainly, there was “daylight” on occasion between the White House and Israel, but the core of U.S. policy remained true to preserving Israel’s security and appropriating record amounts of military aid—with few hiccups.

Congress never flinched from its pro-Israel stand. The recalcitrant Palestinian leadership was as obdurate as ever, despite American pressures on Israel to be generously forthcoming. Similarly, the Iranian regime was militant, radical and anti-American despite U.S. concessions, including pallets of dollars and loosening sanctions. The Obama administration was so frustrated it left office with one desperate door-slamming act in December 2016: engineering the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334 attacking Israel’s settlement and Jerusalem policies. Tant pis!

The last four years have changed the Middle East tableau irreversibly, and not just resulting from White House policy, but that too. The American Embassy went up the hill to Jerusalem, never to come down. Other countries will follow. Many Arab and Muslim countries realized that if they could not beat Israel, it was better to join Israel in economic ventures, intelligence sharing, medical and agricultural cooperation.

Unbeknownst to the progressive cavaliers who have been grounded in America by COVID-19, their Palestinian subjects have also changed. A majority does not want two states. They are fed-up with their ossified and corrupt leadership, and they see, especially those under 40, the vibrancy of the relations their Gulf cousins have with Israel. (JNS/Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Dec 23)