



'Bibi' Votes Republican

by **Patrick J. Buchanan** ([more by this author](#))

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Not since Nikita Khrushchev berated Dwight Eisenhower over Gary Powers' U-2 spy flight over Russia only weeks earlier has an American president been subjected to a dressing down like the one Barack Obama received from Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday.

With this crucial difference. Khrushchev ranted behind closed doors, and when Ike refused to apologize, blew up the Paris summit hosted by President de Gaulle.

Obama, however, was lectured like some schoolboy in the Oval Office in front of the national press and a worldwide TV audience.

And two days later, he trooped over to the Israeli lobby AIPAC to walk back what he had said that had so infuriated Netanyahu.

"Bibi" then purred that he was "pleased" with the clarification.

Diplomatic oil is now being poured over the troubled waters, but this humiliation will not be forgotten.

What did Obama do to draw this public rebuke? In his Thursday speech on the Arab Spring and Middle East peace, Obama declared:

"We believe the borders of Israel should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states. ... Israel must be able to defend itself -- by itself -- against any threat."

Ignoring Obama's call for "mutually agreed swaps" of land to guarantee secure and defensible borders for Israel, Netanyahu, warning the president against a peace "based on illusions," acted as though Obama had called for an Israel withdrawal to the armistice line of 1967.

This was absurd. All Obama was saying was what three Israeli prime ministers -- Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert -- have all recognized.

To get Palestinian and international recognition for a united Jerusalem and Israel's annexation of the settlements around the city, Israel will have to trade land for land.

Obama was not saying the 1967 borders were to be the end of negotiations but the starting point. Indeed, where else would one begin land negotiations if not from the last recognized map?

Undeniably, Netanyahu won the smack-down. The president was humiliated in the Oval Office, and in his trip to AIPAC's woodshed he spoke of the future peace negotiations ending just as Israelis desire and demand.

Nor is this the first time Obama has been rolled by the Israeli prime minister. Obama came into office demanding an end to all new or expanded settlements on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, and subsequently backed down from each and every demand.

Fed up, his Mideast peace negotiator George Mitchell has quit.

Politically, too, the president has been hurt. To the world, and not just the Arabs, he appears weak.

In Israel, Netanyahu is seen as having stood up for Israel's vital interests and forced an American president to back down. His right-wing coalition is cheering him on.

Indeed, the issue is not whether Obama has been hurt, but why Bibi, raised in the U.S.A., who knows American politics better than any previous Israeli prime minister, did it. Why would Obama like that?

Why would the leader of a nation of 7 million that is dependent on U.S. arms, foreign aid and diplomatic support choose to humiliate a president who could be sitting in that office until 2017?

The one explanation that makes sense is that Netanyahu sees Obama as more sympathetic to the Palestinians and less so to Israel than any president since Jimmy Carter, and he, Netanyahu, would like to see Obama replaced by someone more like the born-again pro-Israel Christian George W. Bush.

And indeed, the Republicans and the right, Mitt Romney in the lead, accusing Obama of "throwing Israel under the bus," seized on the issue and, almost universally, have taken Netanyahu's side.

This could be a serious problem for the president and his party in 2012. For, consider:

In 2008, Obama won the African-American vote 95 to 4, or 16 to 1. He won the Jewish vote 78 to 21, by 57 points, a historic landslide.

These are arguably the two most reliable of Democratic voting blocs.

And while the Jewish vote may be only one-seventh of the black vote, it has proven decisive in the crucial state of Florida. Moreover, Jewish contributions, by some estimates, may make up half of all the contributions to the Democratic Party.

If, after hearing an Israeli prime minister berate Obama for ignorance or indifference to the cold

realities the Jewish state faces, Jewish folks decide Obama is bad for Israel and close their checkbooks, the impact in a tight election could be critical.

On the other hand, for African-Americans to see the first black president treated like some truant third-grader by a prime minister of Israel whose nation is deeply dependent on this country has to grate.

In the short run, Bibi won the confrontation, hands down. Like no other leader before him, he humiliated a U.S. president in front of the world, forced him to revise his remarks of four days previous, then graciously accepted the revision.

But a second-term Obama is unlikely to forget what was done to him.

Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World, ["The Death of the West,"](#) ["The Great Betrayal,"](#) ["A Republic, Not an Empire"](#) and ["Where the Right Went Wrong."](#)

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