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THEY SAID IT

No one should have any lingering doubts about what's going on in the Middle East. It's war, and it now runs from Gaza into Israel, through Lebanon and thence to Iraq via Syria. There are different instruments, ranging from Hamas in Gaza to Hezbollah in Syria and Lebanon and on to the multifaceted "insurgency" in Iraq. But there is a common prime mover, and that is the Iranian mullahcracy, the revolutionary Islamic fascist state that declared war on us 27 years ago and has yet to be held accountable.

--Michael Ledeen, "The Same War," *National Review Online*, July 13, 2006.

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THE WAR FOR THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL AND THE FUTURE OF THE PLANET.

This morning, Col. Ralph Peters, normally one of the nation's most astute observers of defense matters, suggested that the current hostilities between Israel and the Iranian proxies were not the result of deliberate acts on the part of the Iranian and Syrian autocracies, but grew out of a series of mistakes made by all parties involved. Specifically, he wrote: "The violence that scorched the Middle East this time didn't result from a sly Iranian plot. It was the product of emotion, miscalculation, impulsiveness and folly. On all sides."

With all due respect to Col. Peters, we think he is wrong. The events of the last two weeks were not only *predictable*, but were, in fact *predicted* – by former Reagan national security aide Michael Ledeen, who back in February wrote the following:

Sometime in late November or early December, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei gathered his top advisers for an overall strategic review. The atmosphere was highly charged, because Khamenei's doctors have diagnosed a serious cancer, and do not expect the Supreme Leader to live much more than a year . . .

Despite this disquieting news, the overall tone of the conversation was upbeat, because the Iranians believe they see many positive developments, above all, the declaration that "it has been promised that by 8 April, we will be in a position to show the entire world that 'we are members of the club.'" This presumably refers to nuclear weapons. Against this cheery background, the assessment of the Iranian leaders continued:

The weakness of the Bush administration is notable. Recent public opinion polls show the country seriously divided, and the top Iranian experts on North America have concluded that the president is paralyzed, unable to make any tough decision (and hence unable to order an attack against Iran);

2006 is an election year, and even some Republicans are distancing themselves from Bush, weakening the White House even further;

Israel is facing the darkest moment in its history (remember that this conversation took place before Sharon's stroke). Likud is divided, Netanyahu is openly against Sharon, and the Labor party has lost its old guard. No strong government is possible (and hence Israel is similarly unable to order an attack against Iran). Therefore this is a moment for Iran to take maximum advantage;

Iranian power and prestige is at an all-time high among the Palestinian terrorist groups, from Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah, to secular, even Communist groups. Terrorists who in the past had rejected Iranian approaches now travel to Tehran for support;

The Syrians have given Iran final say over the activities of Sunni terrorist groups in their country;

Iran now exercises effective control over groups ranging from Hezbollah, Ansar al-Islam, al Qaeda, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Jaish-e-Mahdi, and Jaish-e-Huti (Yemen) to the Joint Shi'ite Army of Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, and part of Saudi Arabia, as well as Islamic movements in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia;

In the four and a half months since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has become president, he has brought the extremist group led by Mezbah Yazdi under control, and, notably, he has forced Syria to resist all pressure from the United States; . . .

Khamenei called for two urgent missions. The first was to do everything possible to drive up oil prices by an additional 30 percent by the first week in April. The second was to intensify the propaganda war against the West in the same period.

Unless we're missing something, it looks to us like the Iranian plan, as forecast by Ledeen, is falling right into place. On April 11 (three days later than Ledeen predicted), the Mullahs announced that they had, in fact, enriched uranium at their Natanz nuclear plant. Since the first of the year, crude oil prices are up roughly 25%. And now, the Iranian backed terrorist operations in Gaza and Southern Lebanon have taken the battle to the untested Israeli government.

Now, we'll gladly concede that Col. Peters was spot on this morning when he wrote that "whoever green-lighted the raid on Israel" made a mistake in that he "didn't anticipate the ferocity or scale of the Israeli reaction." The Israelis have made it clear that they believe that this is more than a mere terrorist flare-up, but is part and parcel of their longstanding war for survival. As events unfold, there is little doubt that the Israelis are determined to do whatever it takes to ensure that Hamas and Hezbollah are unable to launch further attacks of any magnitude. The escalation of the conflict that occurred when Hezbollah, presumably with the help of Iranian Revolutionary Guards, launched a silkworm missile late last week, steeled Israel's resolve and virtually ensured that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) will not stop until Hezbollah is broken, even if that means re-occupying Southern Lebanon.

As things stand now, the proverbial ball is in Iran's court.

If there is a negotiated settlement in the next few days, rest assured that that is because the Iranians have come to the same realization as Col. Peters and have decided that rather than press on with a poorly conceived, poorly planned battle, they'd prefer to live to fight another day. Rest assured as well that if there is no de-escalation of the violence, that is because the Iranians are either unaware of their mistake or unable to back down now that the plan is in motion.

If the latter proves to be the case, then the burden of deciding what comes next will shift to Washington. For our part, we think that whoever green-lighted this operation also miscalculated President Bush's resolve and ferocity. Though the President is likely loath to engage in overt hostilities with Iran, there can be little doubt that he understands full well that Iran and its proxy Syria are already engaged in hostilities with him and with the American forces in Iraq. It is clear that the war for Iraq's future is tied up with the war for Israel's future, which, in turn, is tied up with the war for the West's future. If the Syrians and Iranians do not back down in the war with Israel, President Bush will have little choice but to take the battle to them, presumably by moving aggressively against Syrian and Iranian forces inside Iraq or near Iraq's respective Syrian and Iranian borders.

There is little question now that what started out two weeks ago as a kidnapping has evolved into a regional war. Hamas and Hezbollah are no longer in control of their own fates. Either they will be destroyed by Israel or they will be saved by Iranian capitulation. In any case, the larger battle for the future of the Middle East has begun. The Israelis have fully committed themselves to this war. Over the next few days and weeks, we will learn who else has.

THE SECOND FRONT IN ISRAEL'S WAR FOR SURVIVAL.

There has never been any question in our minds that Israel would eventually have to fight another war for its existence, and maybe several more. Despite seemingly endless efforts by every American president since Harry Truman to convince the Jewish state's neighbors to accept its right to exist, the probability of this happening has never been much greater than that of a brood sow taking wing.

We have made this point many times over the past few decades, most recently in an article written in May 2003 entitled "Melcher's Road Map To Peace," in which we said the following:

The Bush administration's "road map" to peace in the Middle East is not going to work. It isn't going to work for the same reason that the Camp David and the Oslo "road maps" didn't work; that reason being that it fails to address the fact that the land through which the designated road runs is infested with numerous large and murderous organizations that are bent on preventing any traveler from getting past them. This would be like giving Custer a "roadmap" that indicates he might encounter some tough weather on the Montana plains but fails to mention the presence of the Sioux and the Cheyenne.

Oh yes, the Bush roadmap acknowledges a few potholes and possible washouts. But it fails to call attention to the existence of the many large, dangerous, and well-funded organizations that are dedicated to the total destruction of Israel, except in the sense that dragons and sundry sea monsters were included on the periphery of some ancient maps of the world, denoting unknown territory, or "don't go there . . ."

In the final analysis, it remains as true today as it has been since the founding of the modern state of Israel in 1948, that peace will prevail between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East when and only when one of two circumstances obtain: either Israel is defeated or its enemies are defeated.

Needless to say, we have always been confident that Israel would eventually defeat its enemies. We base this not only on Israel's superior military strength and fighting ability but also on the fact that it would be unthinkable for the United States to allow Israel to be destroyed by its Muslim neighbors. After all, Israel is and has been since its founding one of America's most reliable allies in the world.

We still believe this to be the case. But in the past few years, it has become increasingly apparent that there is a large and growing faction within the Democratic Party that is antagonistic to the ties between America and Israel.

This movement has been largely ignored by the mainstream media, but we think its existence is undeniable and is likely to become apparent in the months ahead to anyone who pays attention to the primary challenge being mounted by businessman Ned Lamont against Connecticut's junior Senator and the former Democratic vice presidential nominee, Joseph Lieberman. Lieberman has been famously (infamously?) supportive of President Bush's policy in Iraq, and it would appear that the ascendant left wing of his party intends to punish him for that support by backing the anti-war Lamont, whose challenge has been remarkably strong given Lieberman's incumbency and position of prominence within the party.

Now, when we started this piece on Lieberman last week, we gave it a domestic politics lead and framed it as a story about the fracturing of the Democratic Party's longstanding coalition. But as the week went on and events unfolded in the Middle East, we couldn't help but think that this is, in fact, a story that is bigger and more important than mere domestic political machinations. Depending on the outcome

of Senator Lieberman's quest to retain his power and remain within the Democratic fold, this story has potentially significant geopolitical implications as well. In any case, here we go.

To make a long story short, Lieberman, a three-term incumbent, has been savaged viciously by the hard-left "netroots" faction of his party (think "Howard Dean supporters"). Lamont entered the race specifically to challenge Lieberman on his position on the war and has done surprisingly well, not only drawing the overt support of the party's left-wing base, but denying Lieberman the backing of party leaders and the party machine. Though the incumbent still leads most polls by 10-15 points, Lamont has momentum, enough momentum that Lieberman recently felt it necessary to announce that he will run as an independent candidate should he lose the August 8 primary and thus his party's nomination.

Most Washington pundits and prognosticators have dismissed even the possibility that the Lieberman-Lamont battle might be indicative of a more significant phenomenon, maintaining that Lamont's success is merely the result of Lieberman's poor choices and his personal alienation of the Democratic Party's powerbrokers – both new and old. Even most conservatives see Lieberman's struggle for political life as an isolated event, springing from the Senator's policy preferences and past behavior, rather than as a harbinger of any larger trend.

Last week, for example, our old friend Rich Galen suggested not only that the Lieberman story is of little real interest to anyone other than political junkies (and residents of Connecticut, natch), but that some of the Senator's more serious problems with the Democratic base are unrelated to the Iraq war and actually predate it by several years. Specifically, Rich suggested that Lieberman has been thrown overboard by some of his fellow Democrats – most notably Hillary Clinton – for a speech he made "on September 3, 1998 – a few weeks after Bill Clinton went on national television and admitted he had been lying about the whole Monica Lewinski affair." In that speech, Lieberman "excoriated Clinton" and thereby assured himself of

the enduring enmity of many of his fellow partisans and a most unpleasant spot in the dark, cold void where Hillary's heart would be if she had one.

National Review Online's Jonah Goldberg offered his own explanation of Lieberman's struggles, also dismissing the idea that there is a broader political trend unfolding here. But rather than Lieberman's personal attack on Clinton, Goldberg identifies the source of the Senator's problems as his personal support for Bush. To wit:

Lieberman claims that the war is the only thing distinguishing him from Lamont. That's not exactly right. Lieberman isn't only pro-war, he's seen as pro-Bush — a far greater sin. While the netroots crowd calls Lieberman “scum” and a “lying” this or that, their most damaging attack is a picture worth a thousand dirty words. It's of Bush kissing Lieberman on the cheek, and anti-Joe jihadists have posted it everywhere in the lefty blogosphere.

Bush hatred drives — or poisons — almost everything in liberal politics now.

All of this is well and good. And certainly Galen and Goldberg make some fair points. Indeed, Goldberg makes a strong argument that undercuts the idea that the backlash against Lieberman is exclusively a byproduct of his support for the war. He put it thusly:

The hawk-versus-dove analysis has similar weaknesses. The netroots crowd is obviously passionately antiwar, while Lieberman supports it. But there are other Iraq war supporters whom the Democratic base hasn't targeted, such as Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska, who is also up for reelection.

The problem with Goldberg's argument and his specific citation of Ben Nelson as a counter-example is that Nelson's relative lack of trouble with the left wing actually cuts both ways. On the one hand, Goldberg is right, and Nelson's smooth sailing does

indeed undermine the argument that the attack on Lieberman is exclusively about the Iraq war. On the other hand, it also undermines Goldberg's counter-argument that the attack on Lieberman is strictly about Bush and the Connecticut Senator's affinity for him and his Iraq policy.

While it is true that Nelson, like Lieberman, is a war supporter. It is also true that Nelson is a very conservative Democrat who has made something of a habit of crossing party lines to vote with the President on high-profile issues. Moreover, Nelson is a close and old friend of George W. Bush's, dating to their days as governors of Nebraska and Texas, respectively. What this means is that Nelson is, in fact, far closer to Bush, politically and personally, than Lieberman could ever be. It also means that Goldberg's hypothesis that the Lieberman brouhaha is strictly a Bush-inspired phenomenon doesn't really hold water, which in turn means that there must be another explanation as to why Lieberman in particular has been singled out by the “netroots” left.

It seems to us that most observers here are overlooking the obvious. The proverbial elephant in the room here, the issue that no one seems particularly anxious to tackle is Joe Lieberman himself. What is it about Lieberman that distinguishes him from other moderate/conservative Democrats, such as Ben Nelson, and has somehow made him one of the left's most detested public officials?

Well, for one thing he's Jewish.

It's sometimes easy to forget, now that the “anti-war” movement has been legitimized by various political and media factions, but the opposition to the war in Iraq and the broader war on terror has always had a significant anti-Semitic component. The foundations of the movement can be found in global Marxist/Stalinist groups like International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) and the Workers World Party, which have long supported the radical Islamists in Hamas and Hezbollah in their struggle against the “Zionist” occupiers. The principal criticisms leveled by the left have always focused heavily on “dual loyalty,” subservience to Israeli ambitions, and,

as Democratic Congressman Jim Moran put it more than three years ago, “the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq.”

Back in 2003, before the invasion of Iraq had even taken place, we noted the anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment that pervaded the anti-war opposition, writing that “There are . . . certain important constituencies within the Democratic party’s left wing [i.e. the “net-roots”] that believe that in the case of this war (and the war on terrorism and the general unrest in the Middle East) Jews are, indeed, a significant part of the problem.”

In the intervening years, the anti-Semitic nature of the anti-warriors’ case has grown marginally subtler but no less insidious. The blame for the war and its intellectual underpinnings has been assigned to “neoconservatives” (the old right’s codeword for “Jew”) with particular opprobrium reserved for men with names like Pearle, Kristol, Feith, and, most notably, Wolfowitz, who, the columnist Mark Steyn noted last year, became “the most sinister of all the neocons . . . the man whose name started with a scary animal and ended Jewishly.”

When the term neoconservative lost its bite, the left shifted the focus of its derision to the “Straussians,” those conservatives (again including Wolfowitz) who had studied under Leo Strauss or under Strauss’s protégés at the University of Chicago and elsewhere. In the process, the media and others simply recycled some of the more odious modern, anti-Semitic slanders and conspiracy theories, many of which had previously been championed by the likes of Lyndon LaRouche.

The anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan, who has become an icon of the movement, has long argued publicly that the Jews are the real sinister force at work in the war on terror. Sheehan has openly declared her belief that the war is the handiwork of a “destructive neocon cabal” and has accused this nation’s leaders of using American soldiers to do the bidding of the Israeli government and other Jewish conspirators. Last year she declared:

[M]y first born was murdered. Am I angry? Yes, he was killed for lies and for a PNAC [Project for the New American Century, a think tank chaired by *The Weekly Standard’s* Bill Kristol] Neo-Con agenda to benefit Israel. My son joined the army to protect America, not Israel. Am I stupid? No, I know full well that my son, my family, this nation and this world were betrayed by George Bush who was influenced by the neo-con PNAC agendas after 9/11.

Today, the anti-war left continues to believe firmly that the war in Iraq was somehow inspired by the dastardly Jews. Last week, for example, journalist/columnist Philip Weiss, who has become one of the loudest and most vocal critics of the “Israel lobby” and its nefarious influence on American politics, posted the following on his blog on *The New York Observer’s* web site:

9/11 was a gift to the Israel lobby: it could say, the U.S. and Israel are in the same boat. They said, Now you know how we feel. Indeed, I felt that way myself after 9/11; I thought, Now I know how the Israelis feel.

But the lobby took that same-boatism too far . . .

Bush and Cheney and the neoconservatives then got us to climb all the way into the Israeli boat by deciding, with the help of Joe Lieberman, Hillary Clinton, Chuck Schumer, Howard Waxman, Kenneth Pollack, David Brooks, and Thomas Friedman, to invade an Arab country, occupy it, and initiate a cycle of escalating violence that has reduced cities to charnel houses and sent the educated and affluent fleeing from Baghdad (and thoroughly Islamicized Iraq).

Now, there are a couple of very interesting bits in Weiss’s rant. First, not only does he openly concede his belief that the Israelis manipulated the United

States into war, but he also appears to blame every Jew he can think of for aiding the cause, regardless of their opinions about President Bush and his policies. Second, we're not sure who "Howard Waxman" is, but a quick Google search shows that Congressman *Henry Waxman* has often been misidentified as "Howard" by a handful of rabidly anti-Semitic web sites dedicated to monitoring the activities of prominent Jewish politicians.

Weiss, of course, is not alone in claiming shameful Israeli influence on American war policy or, for that matter, in identifying Joseph Lieberman as one of the leading stooges carrying water for the Israel lobby. Indeed, both of these positions are quite commonplace among those on the left today. Heck, even Bill Clinton appears to think that the Israel lobby played a role. According to James Bennet, editor of *The Atlantic*, Clinton as much as said so in a conversation last week with *The Atlantic's* reporter James Fallows. Bennet writes (emphasis added by blogger Mickey Kaus):

That sounded like a hint that we went to war for Israel: When Jim asked how the Democrats should handle the Iraq war, Clinton replied in part, "We ought to be whipped, us Democrats, if we allow our differences over what to do now in Iraq to divide us" instead of sticking it to the Republicans. He segued into a discussion of Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman's position in favor of going to war, noting how it squared with the view of Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and others that Saddam Hussein was such a menace he should be removed regardless of whether he had WMD. *Then, out of the blue, came this: "That was also the position of every Israeli politician I knew, by the way."* Huh? Where did that come from?

Now, does that mean that Clinton is an anti-Semite or that he thinks Lieberman should be defeated because he is Jewish? Probably not. But it does suggest the pervasiveness among the denizens of the political left

of the belief that somehow Israeli and American Jews have had undue influence on American foreign policy, particularly since 9/11.

For better than three years now, every time we've broached the subject of anti-Semitism in the anti-war movement, we've made sure to preface our remarks with disclaimers such as this: "This is not to say that all or even most Democrats are either anti-Semites or anti-Israel. That would, on its face, be ludicrous, as, historically, a majority of American Jews are loyal and longstanding Democrats. It is also not to say that the party is somehow anti-Israel or overly pro-Arab." But it's getting to where such disclaimers are really beside the point.

The fact of the matter is that a significant faction of the Democratic base believes that American foreign policy is little more than a Jewish conspiracy. More to the point, this faction is currently the noisiest and most visible faction within the party today and is the driving force behind the effort to oust Joseph Lieberman from the U.S. Senate. And no one in the Democratic Party establishment appears to have the clout or the will to stand up for Lieberman against this attempted purge.

Just as it is no coincidence that last week the DailyKos web site (unquestionably the most influential player in the "netroots" community) posted a contributor diary entitled "Imagine a World without Israel," it is no coincidence that the single Democratic Senator the netroots base has targeted for defeat is also the most prominent Jewish political figure in recent memory, the man who would, but for a handful of hanging chads, have been the country's first Jewish vice president.

The left may claim that Lieberman is a target not for who he is but for what he believes. But that is a distinction without a difference. The bottom line here is that the Democratic Party appears intent on purging from its ranks the nation's most prominent Jewish politician and doing so because he holds beliefs – namely that Americans must be vigilant in their

defense against radical Islamists who would destroy both the United States and Israel – that are shared by an overwhelming percentage of his co-religionists. The message here is: “Jews who support the war against radical Islam and Israel’s right to exist are not welcome in the Democratic Party.”

As usual, the Democrats’ timing in this matter couldn’t possibly be worse. Not that there’s any particularly good time to launch a purge of prominent Jews, but right now, this is an especially boneheaded move.

As the war in the Middle East expands to include Israel and the copious clients of the Iranian theocracy, it becomes clearer and clearer that there is really only “one war” against radical Islam and that Israel and the United States are merely fighting the same battle on different fronts. It is quickly becoming evident to anyone who is paying even the remotest attention that Israel’s survival and American victory are inextricably linked. Yet the Democrats continue to argue against that victory.

Ever since September 11, there has been considerable speculation among pundits on the right that the Republican Party would eventually draw a significant portion of the Jewish vote away from its traditional home in the Democratic coalition. In 2004, George Bush made some inroads among Jewish voters, increasing his percentage of the Jewish vote from 19% to 24%. But most observers considered that modest gain to be a modest disappointment for the GOP.

Fortunately for Republicans, they continue to have the Democrats as their opponents and thus can and should hold out hope that the political terrain will change. While President Bush continues to be forceful and adamant in his defense of Israeli actions

against the terrorist aggressors, his Democratic opponents continue to insist that he, not the Islamists, is the cause of all evil in the world. Rather than second the President’s defense of Israel, Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean took the opportunity yesterday to blame the spread of the war on the Republicans and their “failed” policies. Eventually, voters who know better, who understand that the Islamists are the enemy, will tire of this stale and unhelpful rhetoric.

Right now, the contrast between the two parties and their beliefs about the nature of the global war against terror couldn’t be more obvious. George W. Bush is standing firmly behind Israel as she fights off those who would destroy her, while the Democrats are seeking to purge from their ranks the country’s most prominent Jewish politician, simply because he had the temerity to side with the President in blaming the Islamists for starting this war against the West, including Israel.

Given his general history of liberalism, Senator Lieberman insists that he is now and always will be a Democrat. And though his party may reject him, he has the ability under Connecticut law to declare himself an independent and thereby to retain his position of power. Jewish voters will not have that luxury. In a two-party system, if one party tells you that you are unwelcome, that leaves only one option.

The purge of Joseph Lieberman, if it is successful, will be a short-term victory for the netroots base of the Democratic Party. It remains to be seen whether this will help the party in the long-term. The one certainty in this circumstance is that it opens another significant front in Israel’s long war to survive.

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