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THEY SAID IT

Patriotism cannot be what it was because we lack in the fullest sense a patria . . . But my present point is not that patriotism is good or bad as a sentiment, but that the practice of patriotism as a virtue is in advanced societies no longer possible in the way that it once was. In any society where government does not express or represent the moral community of the citizens, but is instead a set of institutional arrangements for imposing a bureaucratized unity on a society which lacks genuine moral consensus, the nature of political obligation becomes systematically unclear. Patriotism is or was a virtue founded on attachment primarily to a political and moral community and only secondarily to the government of that community; but it is characteristically exercised in discharging responsibility to and in such government. When however the relationship of government to the moral community is put in question both by the changed nature of government and the lack of moral consensus in the society, it becomes difficult any longer to have any clear, simple and teachable conception of patriotism. Loyalty to my country, to my community – which remains unalterably a central virtue – becomes detached from obedience to the government which happens to rule one.

Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 1981.

POST-9/11 SADNESS.

Like many Americans, we suppose, after watching as much as we could handle of the memorials and tributes to the victims and families of 9/11, we were conflicted. In our case, though, the conflict was more than merely personal, but was professional as well.

We have always prided ourselves on our optimism about the United States, about the American people, about the Western world more broadly, and about the future, given the traits that are characteristic of these groups. The unique combination of Hellenic-Judeo-Christian traditions and Anglo-Saxon institutions that form the American experience also fashioned a national spirit that reflects an exceptional history and portends an exceptional future. Or so we have always thought.

At the same time, our job here is to try our damndest to forecast the near-term future, to make predictions, in short. And in order to make predictions accurately, we must not only be well informed, but we must do our best to see past our biases, to be as objective as possible (or as necessary), and to address those variables that others do not or cannot see because of their own biases.

Which brings us to our conflict.

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Over the long-term, we continue to believe in American exceptionalism and believe that the cultural, religious, and intellectual inheritance willed to the nation by its forebears, in concert with a great deal of luck, has produced a polity uniquely positioned to weather the storms of the current moment and to dominate the current century much the same as it did the last.

In the near-term, though, we cannot help but see that this inheritance is not being merely ignored by the nation's intellectual and political elites, but openly despised, dismissed, and derided. The American polity may be exceptionally well positioned to take advantage of its civilizational inheritance, but its ruling class is hostile to that inheritance and is therefore inclined to mitigate – if not negate entirely – any benefits it might otherwise be expected to provide.

Or to put this another way: one thing was clear from the 9/11 memorial services, namely that this nation's governing class is unable or unwilling to muster the civilizational confidence necessary to win the war against this nation's enemies, which is to say that we, as a country, are doomed unless things change and unless they change quickly and significantly.

The most obvious manifestation of the civilizational surrender epitomized by the 9/11 remembrances was the policy of New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to ban the participation of religious clergy in the official city commemorative events. Bloomberg, of course, had several reasons for keeping clergy away. None were good. All were revealing. And all said something terribly sad about the state of the debate over the events of that day, now 10 years gone.

When asked why he had issued a blanket ban, Nanny Bloomberg replied at first that it was only appropriate, given that, in this country, we have “this thing” called the separation of Church and state. Perhaps realizing that this was moronic, even for him, he expanded his reasoning (if that's what you want to call it) to suggest that the ban on religion was not meant to forbid religious expression necessarily, but actually to foster greater inclusiveness by precluding exclusion of any

one religious faith or another, which might thereby offend some of the mourners or participants. And if all this sounds more than a little convoluted and concocted specifically to avoid discussing the real reasons for the ban, that's because it is.

In any case, on its face, this excuse is multi-culti pabulum and nothing more. Americans are not children and do not need to be treated as such. The notion that a theoretical failure to include, say, a wiccan priestesses on the dais would spoil the ceremony is ludicrous. A simple representation of the spiritual nature of the mourning process would have been more than sufficient for most Americans, including those with a genuine cause to mourn. And the insistence instead on running from religion in pursuit of the ill-defined and insincere virtue of “inclusiveness” demonstrates nothing more than intellectual and political sloth. Aha, he says! Something might be construed as offensive and therefore be exclusionary. And so we'll settle for nothing which will, instead, be inclusive. Translated into a language in which words have actual meaning, that's the same as saying: I'm too much of a political coward to deal with this.

To be fair, though, that is the nicest, most generous possible spin one may put on the Mayor's explanation, for we doubt that anyone anywhere, even in the Bloomberg residence, believes that load of crap. It is quite obvious, in truth, that Bloomie and others were concerned less with inclusiveness than they were in avoiding the religious aspect of the memorial service altogether. They did not want to have to discuss religion at all, which is to say that they did not want to have to mention the fact that the only reason that anyone was gathered for a memorial service, the only reason any of us remembers the date 9/11, the only reason nearly 3,000 people are dead is because of religion – or rather one religion in particular.

You see, for Bloomie, and Obama, and the rest of the ruling class, 9/11 is no longer an “atrocious,” or an act of “barbarism” or of “war.” It is no longer the incarnation of “evil.” It is, rather, a “tragedy,” or a “disaster,” or some other non-descript denotation

of “misfortune,” no different than a hurricane or an earthquake or any other act of God. Except that this was no act of God. It was an act inspired by God – or rather by a specific interpretation about a specific set of beliefs about a specific understanding of God. And to mention God at all, to mention religion at all, to include religion in the ceremony in any way, shape, or form would undoubtedly compel the mention of the role that this specific God and specific religion played in the events of that day. And to America’s ruling class, nothing could be more traumatic, even, apparently, the slaughter of 3,000 innocents. And so they happily and gratefully kept their mouths shut on the matter of God.

For many, if not most in the American ruling class – and a great many more in the rest of the Western world – the events of 9/11 are not quite as simple as we have just made them out to be. Yes, or course, they will admit that Muslim radicals were responsible for the attacks. But from that point on, their narrative takes on a surreal quality. In their dream-world, these murderers weren’t *really* acting in the name of their religion or, if they were, they were only doing so because they were provoked by the West or by the Americans or by Israel or some such, which is to say that their actions were justified. Or as President Obama’s erstwhile minister and personal spiritual guide Jeremiah Wright put it, 9/11 was simply America’s “chickens coming home to roost.”

And if the attacks were justified, then how can we blame anyone for them, really? And how can we justify a war – or TWO wars – to displace the religio-ideology that motivated them? And how, on earth, can we possibly sit in judgment of them when we have our own sins against humanity to worry about, sins like global warming? Just who do we think we are?

Over the weekend, the utterly disgusting and yet all too mainstream Paul Krugman made the case that the real bad guys in the 9/11 story are the loser-degenerates like Rudy Giuliani and George W. Bush, who, apparently, exploited the “tragedy,” for their own personal ends. And if you think we’re kidding, we only wish we were. As you read the following, please keep in mind that Krugman is not only a columnist

for the *New York Times*, the so-called “Newspaper of record,” but is also likely the most influential leftist economist alive today, a professor of economics at Princeton, and a Nobel Prize winner.

Is it just me, or are the 9/11 commemorations oddly subdued?

Actually, I don’t think it’s me, and it’s not really that odd.

What happened after 9/11 — and I think even people on the right know this, whether they admit it or not — was deeply shameful. The atrocity should have been a unifying event, but instead it became a wedge issue. Fake heroes like Bernie Kerik, Rudy Giuliani, and, yes, George W. Bush raced to cash in on the horror. And then the attack was used to justify an unrelated war the neocons wanted to fight, for all the wrong reasons.

A lot of other people behaved badly. How many of our professional pundits — people who should have understood very well what was happening — took the easy way out, turning a blind eye to the corruption and lending their support to the hijacking of the atrocity?

Did you catch that last bit there? As if absolutely determined to prove that he has no clue whatsoever about the evil unleashed on September 11, 2001, this disgraceful and graceless little man decries the “hijacking” of 9/11 – only he uses the term figuratively, apparently unable to muster the same sort of venomous hatred for the actual, LITERAL hijackers.

Last week, E.J. Dionne, another purveyor of liberal conventional wisdom, declared that it is time to “get over” 9/11 and to move beyond it. The reason he wants us to get over it already, of course, is because he is tired of the “ill-defined” war on terror – never acknowledging that the reason that it is “ill-defined”

is because it is simply beyond the capabilities of the political class to define the war that arose in response to 9/11 more accurately. To do so would, naturally, require an acknowledgement that “terror” is not the enemy. Islamism is. But our gentry cannot bring themselves to say that.

Indeed, to say such a thing would be tantamount to committing cultural suicide to many of our intellectual, political, and artistic elites. We have written many times in these pages, and countless others have written countless other times elsewhere about the alliance between the political left and radical Islam that defies both logic and probity. The cultural, intellectual, and artistic elites appear not to understand or not to care that the left lost the Cold War and that it does them no good whatsoever to continue to fight a rearguard action, hoping against hope to regain some of the credibility that the anti-Western/anti-American left lost at the end of the previous conflict, simply by allying themselves with whatever monsters happen to occupy the position of enemy in the current war.

And so they continue to battle on, choosing to make common cause with those who oppress women, gays, and minorities; those who defy science, progress, and modernity; those who wage war against all that the left professes to value and appreciate, simply because they too happen to wage war on “the West.” The author and blogger Andrew Klavan recently addressed this self-defeating behavior of the cultural and artistic elites in the post-9/11 world with a piece on Hollywood and the shame in which it has covered itself over the last decade. To wit:

When it comes to sheer shamefulfulness, the conformist “radicals” of Hollywood outdid themselves in the years after the Islamofascist attacks on 9/11. When the United States responded to these atrocities by attempting to destroy the terrorist staging grounds in Afghanistan and establish a beachhead of Middle Eastern democracy in Iraq, Hollywood reacted by churning out propaganda movies that could only demoralize our

allies and bolster our low and savage enemies: *Syriana*, *In the Valley of Elah*, *Rendition*, *Redacted*, *Lions for Lambs*, *Green Zone*, *Body of Lies*, *Stop Loss*, and on and on. Many of these films portrayed our soldiers and intelligence officers as rapists, murderers, torturers, or noble fools manipulated by conniving Republicans. Not one of them (including the excellent HBO film *Taking Chance* and the flawed but powerful *Hurt Locker*, which at least showed our troops in a positive light) depicted the wars themselves as good or noble endeavors. Besides *Chance* and *Locker*, these films were bad and they were bombs, showing that ideology, not art or commerce, dictated their content. It was the dark mirror image of Hollywood’s patriotic response to Pearl Harbor in the 1940s, a living diagram of what the Left has wrought in our cultural lives since then.

Klavan’s piece is, in many ways, reflective of a piece we wrote ourselves nearly six years ago, under the title, “Hollywood’s Descent into Madness:”

In Hollywood, by contrast, anti-Americanism appears to have reached unprecedented levels. Indeed, in the movie business, the war on terror has been viewed as a godsend, allowing filmmakers to relive their glory days and revive the expressions of anti-military and anti-American sentiment they’d abandoned briefly after they overdid the whole “awfulness of Vietnam” cliché.

This past August, filmmaker Jason Apuzzo wrote an article in which he described his fellow moviemakers’ contribution to the war on terror, “namely, glossy, starstudded movies that sympathize with the enemy.” Of the ten movies Apuzzo described, two have already been released. They are

“Jarhead,” an indictment of the Marine Corps based on left-wing activist Andrew Swofford’s “notorious and questionable memoirs of the same name” and “Syriana,” George Clooney’s “profound” and “insightful” epic about how oil companies are the real bad guys in the Middle East. Both proved to be box office flops, despite having big-name, normally “bankable” box-office stars (Clooney, Matt Damon, Jamie Foxx). A third, “Munich,” which is Steven Spielberg’s tiresome tale of moral equivalence, will open this weekend and has already been panned by a number of observers from outside of Hollywood as unduly sympathetic to the Palestinian terrorists who carried out the murders of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Summer Olympics. Its box office prospects are considered by many to be nominal at best.

The remaining films on Apuzzo’s list are even more critical of American business, the American military, and even the American President, and therefore can be expected to have a comparable effect on the American public . . .

In Hollywood, it turns out, it’s always the early 1950s, and the greatest enemy is always the American government, which is still out there now trying to round-up, harass, and “black-list” innocent people who are doing nothing wrong and are only trying to advance the will of the collective . . . or something or another. And if you have to make a few murderous Islamists the good guys in your films in order to make the FBI or the CIA the bad guys? Well . . . what’s the harm in that? It’s a small price to pay, after all, for what that bastard McCarthy did, right? Right?

Sadly, according to an article in *Education Week*, if the young in our country are going to learn anything at all about the events of 9/11 and their aftermath, it is quite possible that these degenerates and wannabe-

artists and intellectuals in Hollywood may be the only source from whom they’ll learn it. Apparently, it’s just too difficult, too controversial, and too time consuming for teachers actually to deal with the issue honestly. So they just don’t deal with it at all.

Ten years after terrorists crashed planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the profound impact on the United States is not hard to see, from heightened domestic-security measures to the U.S. role in conflicts deemed part of a war on terror. What’s less obvious is how the attacks have filtered into American classrooms.

Some observers and educators suggest the effects on instruction are generally at the margins, that the events of Sept. 11, 2001, in New York City, suburban Washington, and southwest Pennsylvania appear to get little or no attention in most social studies classes. In fact, fewer than half the states explicitly identify the 9/11 attacks in their high school standards for social studies, according to a forthcoming study . . .

With the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks coming in less than two weeks, schools around the country are expected to take the opportunity to memorialize the event, and in some cases, use it as a topic of classroom discussion. Many students today may have only vague notions of 9/11, since they were young or not even born when the attacks occurred.

Beyond memorial activities, the question is the extent to which schools embed 9/11 and its impact into curricula in meaningful ways to help students make sense of the changes and challenges the attacks sparked, in America and globally . . .

Diana E. Hess, a professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said it's her sense that most social studies teachers spend little, if any, classroom time covering 9/11.

"I think if we did a really good, large-scale study . . . we would find that 9/11 is not in most social studies classes," said Ms. Hess, who speaks to many social studies teachers in Wisconsin and elsewhere. "That doesn't mean it's not in some, or that it doesn't get an occasional mention."

Robert A. Watterson, an assistant professor of social studies at West Virginia University, in Morgantown, echoes that assessment and points to three leading factors: inadequate time in an already-crowded curriculum, teachers' feelings of being ill-prepared to probe the complex issues, and fear among some teachers and administrators of taking on matters with the potential to generate classroom conflict and upset parents.

"Some teachers really back away from interacting with their students in a meaningful conversation on something that could be controversial," said Mr. Watterson, who directs his university's Center for Democracy and Citizenship Education. "You get into values issues and analysis" on subjects that can be "politically charged," he said, whether foreign policy, the balance between civil liberties and homeland security, or issues about Islam in a classroom that may, for instance, have Muslim students.

Ah, yes. Heaven forbid we should have to discuss 9/11 with Muslims students. Heaven forbid we should engage any Muslims in the discussion of that day, the atrocities committed in the name of their religion, and the ten years since spent trying to build a civil society capable of supporting a reformation process within that religion to facilitate a purge of its murderous elements. Heaven forbid. That might be

uncomfortable, you know. And we can't have that. Better simply to ignore the whole thing, particularly the bit about religion.

And that brings us back to the 9/11 memorials and their religion-free "celebrations" of grief. We enjoy a good cry as much as the next guy. But we'd much rather that the memorials in the future be celebrations of the victory achieved by those who survived that day and who went on to understand the meaning of the attacks and the necessity of a proper response.

Sadly, we don't think that's ever going to happen. We, as a civilization, can't even name the enemy in this war. Heck, we can't even admit that it is a war.

Whatever it is, it is our sad prediction this week that it is going to be the death of this country as we know it, unless those whom Richard Nixon once called "the silent majority" begin to speak up and start fighting in defense of their values, their traditions, their God-given rights, their freedoms, and their understanding of government's proper role in the lives of its citizens. The United States of America is unquestionably worth fighting for, and those who believe that this is true had better begin fighting before it is too late.

An exaggeration? Well maybe. We hope so. But we wish we felt a little more certain about it.

THE DOGS OF WAR ARE BARKING.

Pay close attention, gentle reader, the fate of the world – or at least of that piece of the world known as the Middle East – will be decided in part over the next two Tuesdays, beginning today. That is, when all is said and done, one short week from now we will have a much better idea of the future of the Palestinian people, the future of the Israeli relationship with the United States, and the future of Israel itself.

The first event of note is the special election today in New York's 9th Congressional District to fill the seat vacated earlier this summer by Anthony "Look At My" Weiner. Like all of New York City,

Weiner's old district, which covers Queens and Brooklyn, is overwhelmingly Democratic. Yet it appears that Republican Bob Turner just might beat Democrat David Weprin in one of the most shocking Congressional upsets in recent memory. As *The Wall Street Journal's* Alyssa Finley put it yesterday:

The last time a Republican was elected to the seat, which covers parts of Brooklyn and Queens, was nearly a century ago.

Mr. Weiner, who resigned in June after sending lewd photos over the Internet, won re-election last year by 30 points. Barack Obama won the district by 11 points in 2008 . . .

[But] A new Siena College poll shows that Republican Bob Turner has leapt to a six-point lead over Democrat state Assemblyman David Weprin. Last month the GOP businessman was trailing Mr. Weprin by the same margin.

Ms. Finley continues by noting that there is little support in the Siena poll for the theory, being forwarded by some Democrats, that the shift in momentum is related to the fact that "Mr. Turner and former New York City Mayor Ed Koch have tagged [President] Obama as anti-Israel." And though it may be true that the poll does not reflect this sentiment, we're not ready to dismiss the role of Israel and Zionist politics in this election. Far from it, in fact.

New York's 9th Congressional District is the most heavily Jewish district in the country, with roughly a third of the district being Jews. This is not, in our estimation, an insignificant variable in the recent surge by Mr. Turner nor in the possibility that he will win this seat today. Jewish voters may not, as Ms. Finley notes, believe that David Weprin is anti-Israel, but then, his beliefs are not really the point – unless you consider that, as an Orthodox Jew, he was chosen as the Democratic candidate specifically to forestall this kind of embarrassment for the Democratic Party and for the Obama administration more specifically.

Weprin, if nothing else, represents another rubber-stamp "yes" vote for Barack Obama, whose policies have, of late, been remarkably harmful to Israel, both wittingly and unwittingly. As a Democrat, he therefore represents a threat, of sorts, to Israel, irrespective of his personal beliefs or even his personal ethnic and religious background. *Commentary's* John Podhoretz explains:

The one thing we have been able to determine over the past 20 years is that the more "Jewish" you are—meaning the more you attend synagogue, the more you keep kosher, the more you send your kids to day school and Jewish camp, and the more you commit yourself to living a Jewish life with some fealty to the rules of the religion—the less politically liberal you are likely to be . . .

Even if Weprin ekes out a win on Tuesday, the dynamic of the race conclusively proves that Obama does indeed have a Jewish-vote problem—among Jews whose Judaism is intertwined with their daily lives. And he also has a problem among elderly Jews, who also populate the district and are rather less religious—but who are unabashedly Zionist and evidently deeply troubled by Obama's handling of Israel . . .

As Podhoretz notes, "Turner has cannily designed his campaign around the notion that a vote for him sends a message to Obama." And that message, in large part, is that "you are screwing things up for Israel and we have had enough of it." For our part, we have run into endless trouble before trying to forecast shifts to the right on the part of Jewish voters. But as Podhoretz points out, this election gives us an isolated, "real-world" test of the notion that Jews who care deeply about Israel have finally seen enough of what may appear to them to be Democratic coddling of Israel's enemies and are prepared to do something about it.

The second event that deserves close attention and which will take place next Tuesday is the planned unilateral declaration of statehood by the Palestinian Authority. After its declaration, the PA will take its case to the United Nations and seek ratification for its statehood. And, as always, the critical matter will be the disposition of Jerusalem, which the PA will claim as its new state's capital.

For its part, the Obama administration is currently trying desperately to talk the PA out of making its declaration and, barring that, to prevent the United Nations from taking up the question of Palestinian statehood. But whatever happens and whatever the outcome of Team Obama's diplomatic efforts, two things are certain. First, the Palestinians feel emboldened to undertake such a brazen and foolhardy course only because they know full well that whatever they do, it is Israel, not they, who will bear the brunt of the American administration's frustration. And second, this marks the end of the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians that began with the Oslo accords nearly two decades ago, the obligations of which were only ever treated seriously by one side. Or, as the leftist Israeli historian Benny Morris put it: "This is a rejection of all efforts for a peaceful compromise. In its wake will come waves of Palestinian violence."

Now, please note that all of this comes *in addition* to our documentation last week of the increasing threats to Israel from the unrest in the region and the discovery by Israeli Defense Forces of "new" and significantly more dangerous weapons in the hands of Palestinian terrorists. It also comes in addition to the developments over the weekend in which Egyptian mobs attacked and ransacked the Israeli embassy in Cairo, prompting the evacuation of Israeli diplomats from what was – up until this past spring, the so-called "Arab Spring" – Israel's only safe-haven in the Arab world. *The Financial Times* reported the story thusly:

Israel evacuated its diplomatic staff from Cairo on Saturday after its embassy there was ransacked in protests that left three dead and more than 1,000 injured.

Protesters broke into the Israeli embassy at the top of a high-rise building in Cairo and threw hundreds of documents out of the windows late on Friday night.

Early on Saturday morning, police vehicles were set alight outside the embassy, according to Reuters. The news service reported that a crowd of about 2,000 remained in the area.

According to Israeli media reports, an Israeli air force flight left Cairo with more than 80 diplomats and family members on board. Yitzhak Levanon, the Israeli ambassador to Egypt, was among the evacuees.

Regular readers know that one of our favorite commenters on public affairs and politics these days is the academic and author Walter Russell Meade, not the least because he is an old-school liberal who has turned rather viciously on today's Democratic Party. Like all of us who analyze political and social trends for a living, Meade can be both brilliantly right and shockingly wrong in the same essay, which he proved this week in a piece on the Middle East.

In a splendid analogy, Meade compared the pace of change in the Middle East currently to the pace of change in Eastern Europe in 1989. After literally decades of slow, plodding, nearly non-existent alterations in the dynamics of the region (or regions, if you prefer), all of a sudden, the proverbial floodgates were opened and change began to happen at a rather frenetic, almost frightening pace. Or as Meade put it:

Time has often seemed to stand still in the Middle East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict ground on at a glacial pace. Kemalist Turkey, Mubarak's Egypt, Assad's Syria: little changed from year to year

This was a survival of the Cold War political system . . .

During the Cold War, history slowed down. The overarching US-Soviet rivalry froze the world into stasis; change came only slowly. No country left NATO to join the Warsaw Pact or vice versa; the diplomatic agenda changed relatively little from year to year — or even from decade to decade.

With the end of the Cold War, history began to return to a “normal” velocity. Countries got frisky; France has fallen in and out with both the United States and Germany several times since 1989. The rise of China and India transforms the international scene in a way that was common before 1945 but rare during the Cold War.

2011 is the year when the thaw reached the Middle East — or at least North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. Turkey has unveiled a new vision of itself and its place in the world; nobody knows what will happen in Egypt and Syria. Israel has felt the ground move under its feet; it is too soon to tell but it is likely that new regional realities will force the deepest strategic rethink on Israel since the 1967 war.

Meade is right about this, no doubt, and brilliantly so. But then he continues:

It is much too soon to know what the new dynamics of the Middle East mean for American foreign policy . . .

The new Middle East is going to cause some difficult moments for American policymakers, especially as they juggle our relationship with Israel and our other commitments and interests. But on the whole a more dynamic and pluralistic Middle East is probably a net plus for the United States.

Here we part company with Meade. Though change in the Middle East is rapid right now, we do not think that it is too soon to know what this “new dynamic” will mean for American foreign policy. Furthermore, we have no confidence whatsoever that a “more dynamic and pluralistic Middle East” is in the making. And we certainly do not believe that whatever is in the making will be a net plus for the United States.

Given what we know of human nature, what we know of the Islamist strengths in the region, what we know about the Islamists themselves, and what history has taught us about the propensity of various and sundry civilizations to blame Jews for their troubles during periods of rapid change and uncertainty, we have a pretty good idea of the direction in which this headed and we feel quite certain that it is going to turn American foreign policy into a maelstrom of dangerous indecision, doubt, mixed signals, and shame.

In the end, the administration will be forced to decide whether it will live up to its commitments to its only true and dedicated ally in the Middle East.

If New York’s 9th Congressional District elects a Republican, then the Obama administration can either do as Daniel did and read the writing on the wall and thereby step up its commitment to Israel; or it can ignore the message, as it has ignored so many messages before it, and continue to do as it pleases, risking a large-scale Jewish-voter rebellion at the polls next November. If the Palestinians declare statehood and then win the approval of the United Nations with the support of various nations in the West, then all bets are off. Obama may well decide to defend Israel. Or he may decide that he doesn’t care one wit about the Jewish vote and turn his back on the Jewish state. Who can tell?

Here, the problem is not that it is too soon to know. The problem is that Obama is inscrutable, either because he chooses to be, realizing that he has no more idea what he believes that anyone else does, or because his Alinsky-ite training compels him to be.

Agaian, who can tell? What we do know is that if he makes the wrong choice, it is quite possible that the world will witness the end of one of the final existing remnants of the Cold War era, namely the state of Israel.

Relative to this last observation, we have long believed that somewhere in the bowels of the Israeli defense establishment there is a little red button with a sign next to it that reads: Last One Out, Please Push This Button. Why the button? Because unlike most other nations in the world, Israel's defeat would not mean a consolidation or absorption by the victor's country. It would mean the slaughter of every man, woman, and child left standing.

We hope we are right about the button's existence, but hope even more fervently that we are wrong that it may, someday soon, have to be used.

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