

Time for a new ally?

2009-06-16 01:24:27 by Southern

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Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, left, addresses the media with Czech Republic Foreign Minister Jan Kohout after an EU Israel council in Luxembourg, Monday, June 15, 2009.

Photo: AP

US President Barack Obama's Cairo speech was a historic event in many aspects. First of all it was remarkable that a Western leader felt legitimized to talk about Islamic truths, as if he were a Muslim theologian. Secondly, he approached the Israeli-Palestinian conflict even-handedly, as if the Jewish right to Israel and the Arab resistance to it have the same moral weight.

"For decades, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive. It is easy to point fingers - for Palestinians to point to the displacement brought by Israel's founding and for Israelis to point to the constant hostility and attacks throughout its history from within its borders as well as beyond. But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: The only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security."

Within this historic speech, Obama couldn't find words to describe the attack by various Arab armies on Israel the day it was created. He couldn't describe the terrorist attacks that followed the 1949 armistice. He omitted the growing anti-Semitism in the Arab media, the Arab schoolbooks, Arab radio and TV, in the preaching in the mosques. Twice Obama mentioned the anti-Semitic and anti-Christian Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas: "Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, and to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, and recognize Israel's

right to exist."

Obama didn't mention the core message of Hamas: the worldwide destruction of the Jews. Ayatollah Khomeini, the instigator of the present Islamist revolution, defined world history, the course of human events, as follows: "From the beginning, the Islamic movement has been obstructed by the Jews. They were the first who developed anti-Islamic propaganda and conspiracies. And this is still the case."

In other words, opposing Israel, the nation of the Jews, is the driving force of the Islamist revolution, both Sunni and Shi'ite. It is its core. It cannot exist if it would give up its ambition to erase Israel. The destruction of Israel is its ultimate goal, its fuel, its body, its nature, its direction and its destination. Only through the destruction of the cunning, conspiring, obstructing Jews the Islamist revolution can reach its goal: the resurrection of the caliphate.

OBAMA EXPLICITLY decided to ignore this threat, and decided to leave Israel in the cold, or better in the heat of a nuclear explosion. This is what he said: "No single nation should pick and choose which nations hold nuclear weapons." The president meant: Israel, a single nation, doesn't have the right to deny Iran nuclear armament. Iran, an existential threat to Israel, cannot be stopped by Israel on its own - this should be matter of the international community, according to the president.

Through his Cairo address Obama made an end to America's alliance with Israel that has lasted over 40 years. Israel's strategic early allies were Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and especially France, which delivered its famous delta-winged Mirage jets that gave Israel its 1967 victory in the Six Day War. In that year, America, although with a public that was sympathetic to Israel, replaced the tanks Jordan lost. The French refused to deliver new Mirage jets and America hesitated for some time to sell F-4 Phantoms to Israel.

AMERICA WILL now act as even-handedly to Israel as the European Union. This approach hasn't created any progress in the years since the 1993 Oslo Accords. Corrupt Palestinian leaders have transferred billions to their Swiss bank accounts and the international community wishes to look the other way. Gaza could have been a better place by now if Hamas had tried to peacefully build civil institutions. Hamas did not. Without any necessity it fired thousands of rockets at Israel. The problem is - it is Hamas's core business to oppose the Jews.

The EU wishes to ignore all these events and clings to the idea of a "viable Palestinian state," which is an oxymoron. The Palestinians have tribal communities and only fake having a modern civil society. No civil institutions have been built because they are not in the interest of the leading Palestinian families.

The famous Jewish lobby has not been able to prevent Obama's change of direction. The truth is the lobby has always been a myth, and American Jewry, which is in

majority an affluent, liberal, assimilated and only vaguely religious group, has been distancing itself more and more from Israel, which it considers right-wing, militaristic, chauvinistic, belligerent.

For liberal American Jews, Israel is a confusing phenomenon. They feel connected to Israel through the remembrance and legacy of the Holocaust, but they are highly politically correct and feel solidly at home on the campuses where generations of students have been brainwashed by the works written by the holy spirit of Arab studies, Edward Said. American Jewry was aware of the president's spiritual mentor in Chicago, Jeremiah Wright, a black racist and anti-Semite, and of his friendship with Rashid Khalidi, a Palestinian intellectual and anti-Zionist with whom he had a strong personal relation. The Jews preferred to side with him instead of worrying about his opinions about Israel.

And now, after the Cairo address, they will keep standing by him and distance themselves from an Israel that produces awful pictures of bombed buildings and mutilated bodies of women and children - American Jews, at cocktail parties in the Village or the Upper West Side, prefer Israel to act proportionately and to behave as decent, civilized, upper-class Jews, not as Middle Eastern warriors. Since the 1982 massacres in Sabra and Shatila, committed by Lebanese Maronites but attributed to Israel and Ariel Sharon, liberal American Jewry went on a long journey and arrived at a historic point: just like Obama, it gave up on Israel.

A SMALL NATION like Israel, a single and lonely modern democracy in a part of the world in which autocracies and tyrannies are the norm, cannot survive without a strategic partnership with a major international power that is forced, by the sheer size of its interests, to play the complex fields of the Middle East. It is too soon to create a lasting bond with India, a natural ally for Israel. India will emerge during this century as a major international power, both militarily as economically and scientifically, but it cannot give Israel yet the diplomatic and military backup it needs.

But there is another strategic player in the field who would welcome a partnership with Israel, especially with its cutting-edge electronic industries. Of Israel's 5.7 million Jews, more than 1 million have Russian roots. Despite the old anti-Semitism in Russia, there has been a strong melancholic bond between the two populations. In Russia, Jews have excelled in sciences and the arts.

Because of its continuous counterbalancing act with America, Russia has been maintaining ties to Iran and Syria, but it needs to diversify and update its economy and reduce its dependence on oil and natural gas income. It could use scientific and commercial ingenuity, qualities Iran and Syria are not able to deliver - Israel is. And Israel could use Russia's vast resources and the determination of its leader Vladimir Putin, a smart and ruthless leader who understands the cruel rules of the international power game.

Obama's loyalties, and those of the majority of liberal American Jewry, don't lie with Israel. So Israel needs to shop for another ally. In his offices in the Kremlin, Putin will receive its leaders with open arms, dark bread, marinated herring and some bottles of Stoli.

The writer is one of Holland's most renowned writers and political columnists. He has published 15 books, most of them best-selling novels, which have been translated into a dozen languages. He received the prestigious Die Welt Literature Prize in 2002 and in 2006 he received the Buber-Rosenzweig Medal for Jewish-Christian Dialogue. He is an adjunct-fellow at the Hudson Institute.

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