

Israel Connection

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Shavuot: Remaining Awake and Alert

DURING SHAVUOT, we recount the covenant that God made with Israel and reaffirm our acceptance of the Torah. We attempt to reenact and relive *Matan Torah*, the giving of the Torah, on Mount Sinai.

In one respect, however, we do not seek to emulate our ancestors. According to Midrash (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:56), the Jewish people slept so soundly the night before the revelation that “not even a gnat disturbed them.” Moses needed to awaken his minions for the most pivotal event affecting the Jewish people.

The custom of *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*—where people study Jewish texts all night and gather together as a community to pray early in the morning—developed as a safeguard against and a remembrance of the slumbering of *b’nai Yisrael*, the people of Israel. The lesson learned on

Hizballah continues to rearm and reaim on Israel’s northern border and experts tell us that Iran is working harder and faster than ever to acquire a nuclear weapons capability.

The best way to help keep Israel safe and secure is to ensure that the United States always stands by its friend and ally. Now is the time for us to say *na’aseh*, we shall do, as the people of Israel declared *b’kol echad*, with one voice, at Mt. Sinai.

With elections just a few months away, each of us has a unique opportunity to establish and strengthen relationships with candidates for public office, as well as incumbents, so that they continue to understand the importance of the U.S.-Israel alliance.

Just as Shavuot reinvigorates and renews our commitment to Torah, this season should reawaken us to the vast

Palestinians, Arab States Must Adhere to Obligations

OVER THE YEARS, Israel has made numerous gestures toward peace, while often being forced to take action to defend its citizens against Palestinian attacks. If peace is ever to be realized, then the Palestinians and the wider Arab world must demonstrate they are sincere.



The Palestinian Authority (PA) has made numerous pledges over the past fifteen years to clamp down on terrorism and make political and security reforms.

In order for the situation on the ground to improve, PA President Mahmoud Abbas needs to dramatically increase his efforts to develop the institutions of a functioning civil society, with financial accountability and transparency, a functioning judicial system and a governing structure free of corruption.

In Gaza, where Hamas rules, the terrorist group continues to threaten Israel’s destruction.

As a result, Israel faces enormous difficulty in negotiating with Abbas, who does not have control over Gaza—where nearly 40 percent of the Palestinian population lives.

The Arab world also has a vital role to play in fostering peace. Most important—

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Shavuot is that we should not require a wake up call to leap into action.

Today, as patriotic Americans and as proud Jews, we need to stand united now more than ever as the modern-day people of Israel face ongoing challenges to their safety and very existence. Hamas continues to call for the destruction of Israel and regularly terrorizes Israeli citizens with its indiscriminate attacks.

opportunities available to advocate for the shared values that unite America and Israel. With all of the threats affecting Israel today, we cannot afford to be caught slumbering. There’s no time to press the snooze button. In fact, there’s no time to wait for the alarm. Instead, we should heed an important Shavuot lesson. Declare as one community—“we shall do.”

Aid to Israel Vital Amid Increasing Threats

The administration's request for \$2.55 billion in security assistance for Israel represents the first year of a 10-year U.S.-Israel security agreement to help the Jewish state face increasing threats.

Iran—whose leadership calls for Israel's destruction—has made significant progress in its ability to enrich uranium, the critical component for nuclear weapons. The regime has an arsenal of increasingly sophisticated Shihab missiles, with ranges that now extend far beyond Israel.

The terrorist group Hamas has full control over Gaza and has launched thousands of rocket attacks against Israeli civilians.

The Syrian military has embarked on a modernization effort and arms-buying spree not seen since the early 1980s. Russia is offering a wide range of new technologies to Syria, which has amassed tens of thousands of long-range and short-range rockets aimed at Israel.

Iran and Syria have helped Hizballah replenish its stockpile of rockets to levels that exceed its inventory before the 2006 war—some 20,000 to 40,000, according to Israeli security officials.

Advanced weapons systems needed to counter the growing threats to Israel are more expensive today. For example, the new U.S. F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which Israel is seeking to buy to maintain its air superiority, is projected to cost more than \$60 million per plane.

Despite a strong economy, Israel is forced to spend proportionately greater sums of money on defense than any country in the industrialized world. Israel is expected to spend eight percent of its gross domestic product on defense in the coming year.

Stopping Iran's Nuclear Progress: The Efficacy of Sanctions

By Ambassador Brad Gordon



THE UNITED STATES and the international community believe that sanctioning Iran is the best way to halt Iran's drive for a nuclear weapons capability. But is it working?

Critics of sanctions often claim that they are ineffective, only hurting the businesses of the country or countries imposing them. While it is certainly true that sanctions don't always work, it is also true that often they do, and they serve as a useful diplomatic alternative to doing nothing or resorting to military force.

objective. Sanctions have not yet changed Iranian behavior, but they have significantly delayed the time Tehran needs to achieve a nuclear capability, thus raising the cost to the regime. Were it not for sanctions, Iran would most likely already have a nuclear weapons capability. By delaying the time, sanctions keep open the possibility of achieving a change in Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Sanctions work best when they are targeted and applied multilaterally. The United Nations Security Council has the power to impose mandatory global sanctions. Doing so requires, at a minimum, the acquiescence of its five permanent members (the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China), a feat not easily achieved, but in the case of



Regarding Iran, meaningful economic sanctions stand a real chance of being effective. Given the alternatives of either acquiescing to an Iranian nuclear capability or striking Iran militarily—in the words of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, “Bomb Iran or Iran gets the bomb”—employing tough sanctions now makes eminent sense.

There are generally three policy goals for sanctions: first, to force a change in objectionable policies or behavior; second, to raise the cost to the offending country of continuing in that course; and third, to delay the time for achieving its

Iran, it has been accomplished three times.

Multilateral sanctions have worked well in other instances. For example, during the Cold War, western sanctions preventing the transfer of military or dual use (possessing both civil and military potential) technology to the USSR caused the Soviet regime to lag behind and contributed to its demise. The apartheid regime of South Africa collapsed, largely due to international and unilateral American sanctions.

There are times, however, when multilateral sanctions have been unobtainable,

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Congress at Work: Strengthening the Ability to Halt Iran

Congress has played a significant role over the past two decades working to deter Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

SANCTIONING INVESTMENT IN IRAN'S PETROLEUM ENERGY SECTOR

Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996

This landmark law mandates that the United States impose sanctions on companies that invest more than \$20 million per year in Iran or Libya's petroleum sectors. In 2001, the bill was renewed for another five years by the ILSA Extension Act of 2001.

Iran Freedom Support Act of 2006

The law extends previous legislation and strengthens U.S. authority to sanction entities aiding Iran's nuclear pursuit, urges the administration to probe investments in Iran's petroleum sector and discourages the signing of nuclear cooperation pacts with countries assisting Iran's atomic program.



PROHIBITING THE TRANSFER OF NUCLEAR-RELATED MATERIALS TO IRAN

Iran-Iraq Nonproliferation Act of 1992

The law requires the President to impose sanctions against nations that knowingly supply Iran or Iraq with technology that could contribute to its acquisition of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons.

Iran Missile Proliferation Sanctions Act of 1998

The law requires the President to report and sanction foreign companies that have transferred missile technology to Iran. The Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000 strengthened the prior legislation. It was later expanded upon by the Iran Nonproliferation Amendments Act of 2005, authorizing sanctions on any entity that aids a potential Syrian nuclear weapons program and on any related technology and equipment exported from Iran or Syria.



at least initially, and the United States has imposed unilateral sanctions. Even in this case, when we have acted alone, sanctions have been very effective.

In the late 1970s, Argentina and Brazil both had nuclear weapons programs. The United States imposed trade and scientific sanctions on the two governments, and both ultimately gave up their nuclear ambitions.

After Libya was accused of involvement in the downing of Pan Am flight 103, the United Nations imposed sanctions. Libya eventually admitted its involvement in the 1988 bombing, and was relieved of U.N.

atomic work. Over the course of the last 15 years, Congress has enacted several pieces of legislation seeking to impose American sanctions on Iran or on those contributing to its ability to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. As a result, Iran's program has been slowed and its costs have significantly risen. But we have not yet succeeded in persuading the Iranian regime to stop its nuclear drive.

Fortunately, there is still time. The regime in Tehran has grossly mismanaged the Iranian economy, making it vulnerable to economic pressure, while at the same time the regime is unpopular

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sanctions. However, the United States kept its unilateral sanctions on Libya because of continuing concerns about Libyan support for terrorism and its pursuit of nuclear and chemical weapons. In 2003, Libya renounced its support for terrorism and allowed the United States to dismantle its unconventional weapons programs so that it would be free of U.S. sanctions.

Today, we continue to grapple with the significant challenge of Iran's ongoing illicit nuclear program and its defiance of three binding U.N. Security Council resolutions demanding that it suspend its

with the majority of Iranians, increasing its sense of weakness. Nearly two-thirds of Iranians are under the age of 30. Many are either unemployed or underemployed and reject the societal strictures that the fundamentalist regime imposes on them. The official inflation rate is running at more than 20 percent and is in fact much higher.

Iran is totally dependent on foreign investment in its energy sector—the lifeblood of the regime. Oil production has declined by more than 40 percent since the fall of the Shah, while the population has doubled. Without very large-

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Efficacy of Economic Sanctions Against Iran

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scale investment by foreign oil companies, Iran's production capabilities will continue to fall, making it a net importer of oil by as early as 2015. Even now, because it lacks sufficient refining capability, Iran has to import around 40 percent of its daily needs of refined petroleum—gasoline—and has to ration its use.

During the last year, America has frozen the ability of several large Iranian banks to conduct international financial transactions in dollars and has convinced major international banks to cease doing business in Iran. The United States is now urging the European Union to stop allowing Iran to conduct financial transactions in euros, and to end giving export credits (essentially risk insurance) to its own companies doing business in Iran.

Much more, however, could be done. The United States has the ability to sanction any company investing in the Iranian energy sector. If the United States did sanction one, it would deter all, sending the message to the regime in Tehran that continuing its nuclear program means facing an unrelentingly bleak economic future.

Similarly, the United States could take further action to sanction banks that

continue to do business with prohibited Iranian financial institutions.

America could put the Iranian Central Bank, which has been involved in laundering money for support of terrorism and weapons proliferation, on its prohibited list—which would force most banks around the world to stop doing business with it. Both moves could significantly cripple what remains of Iran's ability to do international business through banks.

These, and similar measures, must be taken quickly. Iran's program continues to advance. No one knows exactly when it will begin to produce highly enriched uranium—the key element needed to produce a nuclear weapon—but that time is not far off. If we wish to avoid Sarkozy's terrible choice, we must act now.

Ambassador Brad Gordon is AIPAC's Director of Policy and Government Affairs. Before joining AIPAC, he was Assistant Director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency for Nonproliferation Policy.

He also served as U.S. Ambassador to the Fourth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held in Geneva in August and September 1990.

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Palestinian, Arab States' Obligations

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ly, Arab nations must end their 60-year isolation of Israel and recognize the Jewish state's right to exist with secure and recognized borders. Unless Arab leaders prepare their own people to accept normal relations with Israel, peace will be impossible.

To help Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation succeed, Arab states also can demonstrate their commitment to peace by rejecting extremism and refusing to meet with Hamas until it recognizes Israel and renounces terrorism. Efforts

to bring an unrepentant Hamas into Abbas' government should also be rejected.

Instead, oil-rich Arab nations should be offering financial support to the Palestinian Authority. To date, Arab countries have paid very few of their pledges to the PA, a sign that they may not be serious about peace.

When Arab nations support Palestinians in their effort to create a society based on the rule of law, peace will be within reach.



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