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201016 OBITER DICTA: EARLY JUNE 2010

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Steven Alan Samson

Tuesday, June 1

http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2010/06/01/flotillas_and_the_wars_of_public_opinion_98988.html

George Friedman of STRATFOR offers a post-flotilla analysis of Israel's strategic situation and sees an interesting parallel with Leon Uris's *Exodus*. Earlier I listened to Sam Cohen, a member of the Manhattan Project and the inventor of the neutron bomb, say that Iran has nuclear weaponry and that Israel would have to use low-grade nukes in order to set back the program.

<http://www.newsmax.com/deBorchgrave/NorthKorea-SouthKorea-KimJongIl-KimJongUn/2010/06/01/id/360689>

Turkey, Iran, and North Korea are all fishing in troubled waters. We will hear from Venezuela and Russia again soon enough. Arnaud de Borchgrave notes that the geopolitical landscape is being changed. Indeed, it may be transformed before the year is out. American leadership is reaching a historic low tide.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8826/>

Here is a DEBKA analysis of the weakening American position in the Middle East.

Wednesday 2

<http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/u-s-lies-minimizes-obfuscates-about-nuclear-terror-risk/?singlepage=true>

Sam Cohen hones in on the casus belli that justifies a preemptive attack on Iranian nuclear production. Unfortunately, we continue to suffer from a lack of leadership in this area.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8827/>

DEBKA supplies further evidence about the nature of the flotilla and its connection with terrorist organizations. Turkey is refusing to back off its confrontational stance. The question is whether the Islamists have so effectively neutralized the opposition that it will be unable to regroup. "Secular" Turkey is in peril of losing its freedoms.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8829/>

One possible scenario is for Turkish adventurism to provoke a military response from Israel. But would the Turkish military be prepared to back up the Islamist regime? The Islamists have held the advantage since the failure to outlaw the ruling party a couple of years ago. Since the arrest of major opposition figures

early last year, the AKP has outmaneuvered the old guard. The endgame may be near. Will the secular state give up the ghost without a fight?

Thursday 3

<http://corner.nationalreview.com/post/?q=ZDMwNjQ0ZWZhMDU3NzFkOTZiNmVmMjQ1M2RlMTc5MDM=>

YouTube has posted a video of the attack on the Israeli commandoes taken from above as well as another one filmed off to the side of the ship. Turkey continues to escalate its threats. Victor Davis Hanson puts matters into fresh perspective as he analyzes the nature of international reactions to these events in view of the "international community" and its track record.

Concerning the world's indifference (if not outright hostility) to Israel's existential peril, we should recognize that Israel has long served as the designated scapegoat for the failures of international organizations. And we should also be struck by both the gravity of Israel's dilemma and the depravity of its foes. Pascal's words readily come to mind in the most negative sense: "The heart has its reasons that reason knows nothing of." Jer. 17:9 is even more to the point: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

<http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/hatoyama-resigns-is-japan-falling-apart/?singlepage=true>

Gordon Chang discusses the political disarray that has descended upon Japan during a long period of democratic drift. The resignation of the Democratic prime minister over retention of an American military base on Okinawa leaves a leadership vacuum at a time when China and North Korea are becoming increasingly assertive.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/03/opinion/03oren.html?ref=opinion>

Michael Oren, an Israeli historian who is now ambassador to the United States, provides additional context for the flotilla incident. Hamas and its allies specialize in what nineteenth-century revolutionary anarchists, like Mikhail Bakunin and Johann Most, called "the propaganda of the deed."

"Israel discovered spent bullet cartridges on the Mavi Marmara that are of a caliber not used by the Israeli commandos, some of whom suffered gunshot wounds. Also found on the boat were propaganda clips showing passengers 'injured' by Israeli forces; these videos, however, were filmed during daylight, hours before the nighttime operation occurred."

Friday 4

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast Asia/LF05Ae01.html>

Bertil Lintner, a journalist who has written books on North Korea and Southeast Asia, provides an in-depth analysis of Burma/Myanmar's efforts to obtain and/or develop nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/politics/Mexico-opens-California-office-to-provide-ID-for-illegals-95434969.html>

The Mexican consulate is opening a satellite office on Catalina Island to issue ID papers to illegal immigrants who are resident in California. Is California still a sovereign state?

Saturday 5

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/03/AR2010060304287.html>

Charles Krauthammer summarizes the defensive options for Israel. If the United States had accepted for itself what the "world community" demands from Israel, "a more final solution," American self-rule would have disappeared long ago. And that, of course, is the whole point. Do Americans wish to submit to the rule of international kleptocracies? Our own kleptocracy is certainly bad enough. Perhaps the current administration will cheerfully submit to what the world is demanding of Israel.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8837/>

It appears that PM Erdogan wishes to play Jonah: not reluctantly but boldly. So what history-making message does he have to deliver? Has anyone noticed that all pretense of international law in this situation is under armed assault? If Erdogan cannot be dissuaded, what will he do for an encore?

He would be well-advised to reflect upon what happened to one of his role models, Nikita Khrushchev, who was sacked late in 1964 for what Pravda described as "hare-brained schemes, half-baked conclusions, hasty decisions, and actions divorced from reality."

<http://dailyradar.com/beltwayblips/story/reforming-education-this-is-not-about-teachers/>

Attached is a 4-minute video of Gov. Chris Christie explaining how the New Jersey teacher's union operates. Keep your eye on this man. Here is a real leader. Twenty years after Gov. John Engler of Michigan took on the educational establishment, Gov. Christie of New Jersey sounds more presidential than the president.

<http://www.investigativeproject.org/1933/berman-book-showcases-intellectual-double>

Paul Berman, who published *Terror and Liberalism* several years ago, has a new book, *The Flight of the Intellectuals*, which is expanded from a lengthy piece he did on Tariq Ramadan in *The New Republic* three years ago, which is available at: http://docs.google.com/View?docid=ah6sxjndq9qq_315dwk7qn

The attached review focuses on the collaboration of radical Muslims - among them the Mufti of Jerusalem and the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Ramadan's grandfather, Hassan al-Banna - with Hitler's Nazi regime.

Reply to a friend:

It is time for Helen Thomas to retire. Should we require her to go back to her parents' homeland, Lebanon, which is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Baathist Syrian regime? How can she believe that the United States is a Jewish homeland and that Israel is not? The population of Jerusalem may have been a majority Jewish 150 years ago, even before the aliyas from Europe.

Despite her nearly seventy years of adulthood, Thomas seems somehow to have missed the fact that Jews cannot go back to Poland and Germany. It is not simply a matter of choice one way or another. The surge of radical Islam and the resurgence of neo-Nazism in Germany are again making Europe even less hospitable than it was fifty years ago.

To rephrase Tacitus, the PC Germans create a desert and call it peace, a vacuum and call it a homeland. Will the last German who leaves this neue Pax Germanica please turn out the lights?

<http://www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=162621>

Joseph Farah is not so easy on Helen Thomas.

Sunday 6

<http://www.debka.com/article/8838/>

Unless diplomacy manages to defuse the crisis, the Eastern Mediterranean is approaching a flashpoint. If these reports are accurate, the Turkish government is assembling troops in the Turkish sector of Cyprus while preparing to send an armed convoy in the guise of a humanitarian aid flotilla to Gaza. It appears that the ruling AKP has taken less than a decade to tip its Islamist hand. Contrary to his public commitment to uphold the system, Erdogan has been undermining Ataturk's secular constitution systematically. The failed judicial effort to outlaw the AKP in 2007 was followed by the arrests of prominent political figures involved in an alleged coup plot the following year.

The crucial question is whether the old military and political elite will be able to reassert itself before a new caliphate is imposed. The Gaza flotillas appear to be designed to consolidate AKP control in Turkey by provoking a military confrontation with Israel. Such preparations are reminiscent of the massing of forces on Israel's borders, an act of war that occurred in 1967.

The power equation in the Middle East is being changed by the intervention, this time, of two non-Arab states: Turkey and Iran. If either or both become nuclear powers, the decade ahead may see a large-scale return to the Hobbesian state of nature, in which the life of man is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

<http://www.jpost.com/Features/FrontLines/Article.aspx?id=177432>

The Jerusalem Post offers what may be the most definitive summary to date of the taking of the Mavi Marmara. But the public relations dilemma seems inescapable. "As one senior IDF officer said this week: 'It might just be that whatever we do these days there will be a Goldstone report waiting around the corner.'"

http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/06/a_dying_profession.html

If we wish to better understand the looming shortage of medical practitioners, Arie Friedman, MD, offers a thought-experiment on how to advise a prospective medical student. It is not your typical graduation send-off or morale-boosting rallying cry. Instead, it is more on the order of the surgeon general's warning on a pack of cigarettes, saying in effect: You are about to embark on a long period of indentured servitude with diminishing prospects for recovering your initial investment (what economists call opportunity costs and most everyone else would call "being in debt up to the ears") during the expected course of a medical career. Any sensible young person might conclude that life is too short to engage in "A Dying Profession" - with the end result that life is likely to become "too short" for the rest of us, too.

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/what-is-assad-hiding-in-his-backyard-1.292935>

Haaretz raises the question of where Saddam hid his WMDs. This matter is addressed in Kenneth Timmerman's *Shadow Warriors*.

<http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/reagan-d-day.htm>

Last Monday, a couple of days after Sarah and Ben's wedding, four of us visited the D-Day Memorial in Bedford. We visited with one of our recent graduates and then with a WWII veteran who had not been at Normandy. At a time of strident posturing by our current leaders, it is well to remember President Reagan's 40th anniversary tribute to the D-Day veterans. I encountered a couple of typos in the text that was reprinted at RealClearPolitics, so I am sending along this one instead.

Monday 7

<http://www.debka.com/article/8839/>

A group of 10 missile-ship captains in the Israeli Navy reserve force has demanded an investigation of specific failings that resulted in bloodshed on the Mavi Marmara.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8840/>

DEBKAFfile contends that, during the past week, a "semi-clandestine sea war" has broken out between Israel, Turkey, and Gaza-based Hamas. In the meantime Turkey is searching for Israeli fingerprints on a Kurdish guerrilla attack later that same day on its naval base at Iskenderun, where the government has recently placed anti-air missile batteries meant to deter Israeli air attacks in Syria and

Lebanon. It should be remembered that the Syrian nuclear site Israel destroyed three years ago was not far from the Turkish border.

<http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/meet-israel-radios-iranian-born-broadcaster-menashe-amir/?singlepage=true>

An interview with Israel Radio's Farsi broadcaster discusses the prospects for toppling the Iranian regime.

<http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/amir-abbas-fakhravar-leading-the-charge-against-the-islamic-republic/?singlepage=true>

Near the anniversary of the fraudulent election in Iran, one of the founders of the Confederation of Iranian students, who spent five years in Evin prison, discusses the resistance against the Iranian regime.

http://townhall.com/columnists/BruceBialosky/2010/06/07/we_need_a_vat_we_already_have_on

America's corporate income tax, which is a value-added tax, is effectively the highest in the world in many parts of the United States. Bruce Bialosky discusses its consequences.

<http://www.danielpipes.org/8329/palestine-betrayed>

Daniel Pipes reviews Efraim Karsh's *Palestine Betrayed*, which is based on extensive archival research that shows that Arab rejectionism goes back to the rise of Amin al-Husseini, who was appointed Mufti of Jerusalem.

Pipes concludes: "Proving that for 90 years the Palestinian political elite has opted to reject "the Jewish national revival and [insisted on] the need for its violent destruction," Karsh correctly concludes that the conflict will end only when the Palestinians give up on their 'genocidal hopes.'" Those genocidal hopes appear to have either infected or silenced a sizable portion of the western political establishment, as well.

Monday 7

Reply to a Student:

I am sorry to hear of the situation that you describe but I am also not surprised that it is so. The title of Paul Rahe's book, *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift*, sums up the challenges we face. Pitirim Sorokin, Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, Christopher Dawson, and others recognized this drift even before the Second World War broke out. Unfortunately, we have too long been promoting theories and forms of government and economics for which, in much of the world, the ground has not been prepared and that, as we may eventually learn, have even undercut the ground of those nations that gave birth to them.

As I consider events in the Middle East, Turkey and Iran are boldly and rapidly pushing toward direct confrontation with Israel. Any reasonable person might ask why this is happening now. The answer, in part, is fairly simple: American

hegemony is declining in large part because of a loss of credibility. To change the expression: We have become too self-absorbed to be any earthly good, too earthly-minded to be any heavenly good. Recalling the hegemonic transition theory, we should expect American leadership to be increasingly challenged, again in part because our political class has lost its vision - because, as the ancient Chinese put it, our leaders have lost the "mandate of heaven."

Have we so forgotten our history that we do not recognize the signs of the times? Consider this: Even after the overindulgence of the "Roaring 20s," the United States cut a bold figure during and following the Second World War - in part because it had gone through a severe testing during the Great Depression. In *The Suicide of Reason*, Lee Harris recognized - though was not altogether approving of it - the Calvinistic, self-disciplined strength of the Americans, Canadians, and Australians who rolled back the armed forces of the Axis and helped establish international institutions that today entangle us in a nightmare of tyrannical legalisms.

Now let us consider what has happened since the Cold War. The Democrats campaigned for a "peace dividend" in 1992 and America collectively put itself out to pasture once the outside pressure was lifted. Instead of a new beginning, the Gulf War represented the last gasp of an era in which America projected confident leadership following the self-indulgence of the late 1960s and the decade of the 1970s. What remains to be seen is whether its brief revival following 9/11 proves to have been an anomaly.

During the past two decades, America has become so self-indulgent, pliable, and supine (Jose Ortega y Gasset's application of the word "invertebrate" to Spain comes to mind) that little is being done to discourage Islamist adventurism. On the contrary: We cast out one evil spirit only to find ourselves faced with even more today. The spoiled fruits of James Kurth's "Protestant Deformation" have come home to roast. Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn's "Whiff from the Empty Bottle" better describes our current reality, although even as late as the 1970s he believed that America's Calvinist heritage was still formidable. As a consequence of short-sightedness and our failure to develop coherent foreign and domestic policies, a protracted period of political, financial, and societal deterioration lies ahead of us, both internationally and domestically.

I am hoping this time that the American public (and the West generally) will demand better and that a self-sacrificing leadership will begin to emerge that can take timely action. We must begin getting our house in order before the storm hits with full force. Most of the national decision-makers of today have little sense of what the times require. Getting our financial house in order, as Angela Merkel is demanding, would be a useful first step. Until then, the rest of the world will only shrug its shoulders, roll its eyes, and mock.

You mentioned Herb Schlossberg, who is an old acquaintance I have not seen since the mid-90s. He moved from Minnesota to the DC suburbs of Virginia a couple of decades ago and I last visited him before we moved to Virginia. I used his *Idols for Destruction* as a textbook in a class I taught at Indiana Wesleyan University back in the late 1980s. I wish he would update it - just as I wish Paul Johnson would update *Modern Times*, which I also used as a text back then. In a conversation last month with a visiting scholar on the subject of Christian

worldview material, I learned that he had rejected *Idols* for publication, which, in my judgment, does not reflect well on his.

I can also recommend other books you may find helpful in preparing your thesis. One student is drawing on M. Stanton Evans's *The Theme Is Freedom* for his thesis this summer. Highly challenging statements of your basic theme may be found in the works of Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, particularly *The Christian Future* (published after WWII) and *Out of Revolution* (originally written in the late 1920s). Rosenstock has a continuing influence through his students, such as Harold Berman, who recently passed away. John Witte, a student of Berman, continues to carry on the tradition. Pitirim Sorokin's *The Crisis of Our Age*, which I read more than four decades ago, shaped the course of my subsequent studies. I plan to read Christopher Dawson's *Religion and the Modern State* this summer and perhaps return to research I commenced in the early 1970s.

http://townhall.com/columnists/DennisPrager/2010/06/08/if_israel_is_not_evil,_the_world_is_in_big_trouble?page=full&comments=true

Dennis Prager punctuates his review of the world's reaction to the Gaza flotilla incident with a nifty twist of the knife. Not only is the world in big trouble, but so especially is America. Should we remind the 2x (LA&NY) that Israel is not the chief target of such invective, but, in many ways, is only America's proxy? Of such scapegoats, René Girard notes that "the real source of victim substitutions is the appetite for violence that awakens in people when anger seizes them and when the true object of their anger is untouchable. . . . Today as in the past, to have a scapegoat is to believe one doesn't have any." The whole world needs to wise up fast and get smart.

Tuesday 8

<http://www.debka.com/article/8842/>

The Iranian-Turkish game plan is unfolding, timed for maximum publicity. More than fifty years after the Suez Crisis, this confrontation is meant to be a game changer. If successful, the genie is unlikely to be forced back into the bottle.

Wednesday 9

<http://www.debka.com/article/8843/>

It has been clear for months that the Obama Administration wishes to see the Netanyahu government replaced by a more pliable one. What this article indicates is that Egypt's blockade of the Gaza Strip is now collapsing as the United States withdraws financial support for a steel "anti-smuggling" wall along a critical route.

http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/06/pushing_big_government_through.html

It is one of the laws of politics that government tends to grow at the margins. Robert Weissberg, a recovering political scientist, notes how governments invest the people's time and treasure into filling "gaps," much like the Dutch boy who

prevented a deluge by using his finger to plug a hole in the dike. A gap, in this case, is any apparent discrepancy between the "haves" and "those who have less" that can be remediated by government spending. Weissberg's observation is akin to Kenneth Minogue's historical note on the early modern state's discovery of "dependency" as a means of leveraging the political dreams of office-holders. As Minogue has observed, the substance of what he calls "political moralism," which is used to justify such philanthropies, is the provision of relief for suffering through management by experts. Mediating institutions with their own experts, such as private philanthropies, churches, and businesses, need not apply - or, if they do, must submit to the guidance of the state.

Friday, June 11

<http://article.nationalreview.com/436055/wanting-to-abolish-the-department-of-education-is-not-radical/mona-charen>

Mona Charen endorses abolition of the Department of Education, which Sharron Angle has made one of her campaign positions in her senate race against Harry Reid. Ronald Reagan campaigned for the same result thirty years ago.

<http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/geert-wilders-shocks-the-netherlands-on-election-day-%e2%80%94-will-he-get-to-lead/?singlepage=true>

For the past three years, Belgium has gone through a series of temporary coalitions in the face of a possible divorce. It now appears that the Netherlands is facing similar instability following this week's elections. The Christian Democrats came out fourth place in the polling. "Harry Potter," as PM Balkenende is sometimes called, has resigned from his leadership position. Geert Wilders' Freedom Party has risen to third place (24 seats) while the VVD, from which the Freedom Party split, is one seat ahead of the Social Democrats in first place with 31.

In many respects, Europe is politically in much the same dispirited condition as it was seventy-five years ago, when Christopher Dawson published *Religion and the Modern State*. Consider this passage on pages 43-44:

"In the past Western society could dispense with an official state-philosophy such as we find in Russia to-day, because European civilization and the European State equally possessed a religious foundation and based their social and political life on religious sanction. A State which possesses an established church obviously does not have to create its own spiritual ideals or its own moral standards, for these things are already given in the church. But the secularization of Western society brought with it not only a loss of religious unity and religious faith, but also the disappearance of those objective and moral standards and values which provided a spiritual basis for social and political life. Hence the growing sense of spiritual unrest and mal-adjustment that accompanied the progress of modern civilization. The modern State is far richer and more powerful than any community of the past, but it is disturbed by an obscure sense of collective guilt which expresses itself in revolutionary movements and in the cravings of social idealism for some political or economic panacea which will automatically produce a perfect society."

Dawson thus recognized the totalitarian tendencies even in the liberal democracies of his own day. Today the West is once again walking on the edge of the knife even as that knife is being burnished on the wheel of misfortune. Let us name the deadly horsemen that stalk Europe today: insolvency, infertility, ideology, and Islamism.

Last night Sally and I watched "Schultze Gets the Blues," which won several awards after it was released. In many ways, it is a metaphor, almost a parable, of a Europe that is becoming encased in amber.

<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/platform/2010/06/howard-flight-three-political-and-economic-fundamentals-for-the-government.html>

Howard Flight comments on the centrality of Britain's financial services sector, a.k.a. the City, in the effort to bring stability to the roiling economies of the European Union. He notes some of the pitfalls that lie ahead.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article7148555.ece

According to the *Times of London*, a number of sources – American, Saudi, and Israeli – indicate that Saudi Arabia has been testing its defenses in order to prevent its jets from scrambling in the event of an Israeli flyover to carry out strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Saturday 12

<http://www.debka.com/article/8845/>

This DEBKA piece on the emerging Turkish-Iranian partnership underscores the severity of the danger in the Middle East right now. Unless we wish to see Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States resign themselves to being pulled into the Iranian orbit, and cut the best deal they can, the Obama Administration needs to make some tough choices now. The Iranian regime, as fragile as it may be, is now perceived as the strong horse. Others, either opportunistically like Syria or fearfully like the Gulf States, may soon have to submit to its hegemony and join the herd. Practically speaking, this gives a new meaning to Islam as “submission.”

Meanwhile America and Israel appear to be hamstrung by demands for an investigation of the Mavi Marmara incident. What comes to mind is the phrase "fiddling while Rome burns." Sunni and Shi'a Islamists are cooperating. In stepwise fashion, two regional powers, both of which were partitioned in the twentieth century, are now marking out spheres of influence. Geopolitically, pressure is building toward a major shift of the tectonic plates in the Middle East. The clock is picking as new realities force fateful decisions with long-lasting consequences. The ability of NATO to respond to crises in the future is now in doubt. So is the ability of Europe to stand firm against rising tyrannies to the East.

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100418074042AAEJOeD>

A little tidbit about the role of Best Man.

Sunday 13

<http://www.lvrj.com/opinion/obama-s-agenda--overwhelm-the-system-95716764.html>

Rhetorically this piece may seem a bit over the top, but the writer understands how the dots connect. If the Democrats can keep their opponents divided and off-balance in November, the mischief they can do in the following years is virtually unlimited.

I was introduced to the writings of Cloward and Piven back in 1977. In fact, I have their book entitled *Regulating the Poor*. My introduction to college teaching forced me to think through my political philosophy. As an adjunct political science instructor at Chemeketa Community College, I was required to use the same books the full-time faculty member selected for her courses, including Michael Parenti's *Democracy for the Few* and Edward Greenberg's *Serving the Few*. As a consequence, I developed lectures that were independent of the textbooks. I followed that procedure for many years, long after leaving these books behind. In fact, the last class I taught at Chemeketa was an American History course in 1980. It was the first college history course that I taught. The textbook used by the history faculty was informed by a more standard liberal point of view.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8846/>

DEBKA summarizes the bad news about Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Bush Administration took its eye off the ball in Afghanistan when it shifted its focus onto Iraq - or, to change the metaphor, from one bird in the bush to another. Both are likely to turn into strategic defeats under current policies.

Monday 14

<http://corner.nationalreview.com/post/?q=ZTU4ZWEzMjE4NDQ0ZjEyOGM1MjYyZDQxZmNiYTM2ODM=>

Victor Davis Hanson urges that the West take strategic precautions against a neo-Ottoman Turkey that aspires once again to lead the Muslim world.

Tuesday 15

<http://www.debka.com/article/8848/>

The term that best describes Majlis Speaker Larijani's planned appearance at the Gaza-Israel border is "outbidding" or "overbidding." Assuming that the Iranians and Turks are trying to outdo each other in a game of "goad the Israelis," we can expect the developing mimetic rivalry to escalate. Meanwhile, the Israeli government appears to be submitting to various demands by the American government. The one abiding reality in the Middle East is that the circus must go on.