

## Column One: Iran doesn't mix signals

Caroline Glick , THE JERUSALEM POST

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The footage of the British hostages thanking Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for his hospitality and forgiveness, like the footage of Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi covering her head in a scarf while on a visit to Damascus, was enough to make you sick.

Must we lose this war?

On Tuesday, US President George W. Bush had some clear thoughts on Pelosi's visit. Bush said, "Going to Syria sends mixed signals - signals in the region and, of course, mixed signals to President [Bashar] Assad... Photo opportunities and/or meetings with President Assad lead the Assad government to believe they're part of the mainstream of the international community when, in fact, they're a state sponsor of terror; when, in fact, they're helping expedite - or at least not stopping - the movement of foreign fighters from Syria into Iraq; when, in fact, they have done little to nothing to rein in militant Hamas and Hizbullah; and when, in fact, they destabilize the Lebanese democracy."

The president's criticism was well-founded. By visiting Damascus, Pelosi strengthened Assad's view that the free world has no problem with his behavior. Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem made this clear Tuesday when, speaking to a Kuwaiti newspaper, he said Pelosi's visit proved that Syria's international isolation, which began after Damascus masterminded the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, is officially over.

Other Syrian officials made clear that far from softening Syria's policies, Pelosi's visit, like those of European leaders, will only toughen Syria's positions. As Imad Moustapha, Syria's ambassador in Washington, put it, "Syria will not hurriedly offer concessions when it refused to offer them under much greater pressure from the United States in the past."

On Wednesday, Pelosi stated triumphantly, "We were very pleased with the assurances we received from [Assad that] he was ready to resume the peace process. He's ready to engage in negotiations for peace with Israel."

Yet this is a lie. Over the past several weeks, it has become abundantly clear that Syria is preparing to attack Israel in the coming months. If Pelosi had bothered to pay attention, she would have noted the terrorists from Gaza, Lebanon and Iraq passing her at the Damascus airport en route to training camps in Syria and Iran.

Unfortunately, Pelosi isn't the only self-declared "champion of peace" who is strengthening Syria's will to attack by appeasing Syria directly or through its master, Iran.

ON THE face of it, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who also paid a visit to Syria this week, seems to take a stronger stand on the issues than Pelosi. While visiting Ramallah she called for Hamas to accept Israel. While in Lebanon she called for Syria to stop arming Hizbullah. While in Israel, as is her wont, she said that

70 years after her nation murdered a third of the Jewish people, she strongly opposes letting Iran acquire the means to kill another six million Jews.

Strong words. Unfortunately, Germany's actions tell a different story. As German political scientist Matthias Kuntzel pointed out in a recent paper, through its support for German trade with Iran, Merkel's government is a central driver of the Iranian economy and so enables Teheran to finance both the global jihad and its nuclear weapons program.

Immediately after its sailors and marines were taken hostage on March 23, Britain tried to mobilize the European Union to support its actions to bring about their release. Since Britain is a member of the EU, and since the capture of the servicemen was an act of war, in taking the 15 British sailors and marines hostage, the Iranians committed an act of war against the EU.

Europe is Teheran's largest trading partner. A quarter of Iranian exports go to Europe, and 40 percent of Iranian imports are from Europe.

Britain reportedly asked its EU sister-states to respond to this act of war by freezing their trade ties with Iran. Its request was met with immediate rejection. Reportedly, Germany led the pack in saying no. This is a shame since freezing European trade with Iran would effectively start the countdown for the fall of the mullahs.

Merkel's Germany is Iran's largest trading partner in Europe.

Kuntzel quotes Michael Tockuss, the former president of the German-Iranian Chamber of Commerce in Teheran, explaining, "Some two-thirds of Iranian industry relies on German engineering products. The Iranians are certainly dependent on German spare parts and suppliers."

Germany's booming trade with Iran would have gone bust long ago had it not been for the largesse of the German government. The German government, which supposedly opposes Teheran's nuclear weapons program, provides export guarantees for 65% of German investments in Iran.

When seen in the context of her government's subsidization of the Iranian economy, Merkel's anti-Iranian and anti-jihad statements are exposed as farce. Iran, Syria, Hizbullah and the Palestinians have no reason to be concerned. Their principal trading partner in Europe will not abandon them.

FOR ITS part, Britain too, has little to be proud of. The British government's response to the kidnapping of its sailors and marines was cowardly and dishonorable. Rather than fight to free them, Britain bowed before Ahmadinejad to free them.

Prime Minister Tony Blair claimed that London wished to bring about the hostages' release without rewarding Teheran for its aggression. If this were the case then Britain did not have to turn to the EU, the UN or even the US for assistance. The British had ample options at their disposal to contend with Iran. And none of them required the use of force, or the support of other states.

The British could have closed their embassy in Teheran. Indeed, after the mullahs organized a violent mob to attack the embassy and call for its capture, it was irresponsible for the British to keep their embassy open. Moreover, the British could have closed the Iranian embassy in Britain and either deported or detained Iranian officials operating in their territory.

In his paper, Kuntzel notes that while British trade with the mullahs is only one-fifth of Germany's, it is

nonetheless significant. Since 2003, when Iran's nuclear program was first exposed, British trade with Iran has nearly tripled. And as is the case with Germany, the British government also backs the trade with export credits.

Earlier this year, the official UK Trade and Investment Department was promoting trade with Iran. Its Web site gushed, "Iran is one of the most exciting countries in the region for business development... The main opportunity for UK business is in providing capital and equipment to Iran's priority sectors: oil, gas and petrochemicals, mining [and] power."

If Blair truly wished to force Teheran's hand, he might have considered ending his government's subsidy of the Iranian economy.

Perhaps British and European hypocrisy, and even the hypocrisy of the US Democrats can be shrugged off as nothing new. But it is more difficult to shrug off complementary behavior by the Bush administration.

Today some of the most confusing signals are coming from the Bush administration. On the one hand, the US naval buildup in the Persian Gulf leads many to hope and believe that the US military is planning to launch a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. On the other hand, it is fairly clear that Bush agreed to pay Teheran off in exchange for the hostages.

Ahmadinejad announced that he was setting his British hostages free on Wednesday. On Tuesday, the US released Jalal Shirafi, who until his capture some months ago served as a terror master for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Baghdad while doubling as the second secretary at the Iranian embassy. Also Tuesday, the British announced that the US would allow Iranian officials to visit five other Revolutionary Guards terrorists that the US arrested in Irbil, Kurdistan, in recent months.

UNFORTUNATELY, IRAN and its underlings share none of the American or European penchant for two-facedness. As the IDF's head of Military Intelligence Maj.-Gen. Amos Yadlin told the cabinet on Sunday, Iran, Syria, Hizbullah and the Palestinians are all openly preparing to go to war against Israel and the US this summer.

Moreover, Iran maintains its single-minded pursuit of nuclear weapons. As ABC news reported on Monday, over the past three months, Iran has tripled to more than 1,000 the number of centrifuges it will use for uranium enrichment. This puts Iran well in line to abide by Ahmadinejad's pledge to operate 3,000 centrifuges by next month. Indeed, the latest report makes clear that if Teheran is not stopped, it will likely acquire nuclear weapons in another year and a half.

Even more distressing than America's policy confusion is Israel's policy collapse. Israel, the country most directly threatened by current regional and international trends, finds itself at this dangerous juncture with no policies toward our enemies or toward the countries of the free world.

In his recent holiday interviews, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert did not make one clear policy statement toward Iran, Syria, Hizbullah or the Palestinians. Olmert's inability to assert a constructive or coherent Israeli policy on any strategic issue has rendered the country a strategic irrelevancy. As numerous Israeli officials have admitted since last summer's war, the Americans and Europeans no longer give weight to Israeli statements. So too, as the Riyadh summit made abundantly clear, the Arabs and Iranians have also stopped taking us seriously. This unacceptable and dangerous state of affairs will end only after the Olmert-Livni-Peretz government is voted out of office.

If maintained, the current policy trend will lead us directly to the worst-case scenario. In this scenario, after the US leaves Iraq in shame, or remains only to watch the country officially become an Iranian proxy, Israel will find itself encircled and under attack from Teheran's proxies as Iran itself becomes a nuclear power.

But it is far from inevitable that the current trend will continue. For every step that takes us toward the worst-case scenario, there are multiple counter-steps that can lead us away from it. This week the British could have honorably confronted the Iranians. They still can.

The Americans can attack Iran's nuclear facilities.

Germany can destroy Iran's economy.

Israel can initiate a campaign against the Palestinians or Hizbullah or Syria and so weaken Iran's creeping regional hegemony and at least partially extricate itself from its present encirclement. (To this end, of course, the Knesset must vote for new elections and the people must choose a government capable of crafting policies to defeat our enemies.)

Iran grows stronger in the face of Western weakness and hypocrisy. But it still isn't all that strong.

The fact remains that even at this late date, we alone will determine whether we win or lose.

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A blue banner for Sportingbet. On the left, there is a glowing football. The text "WARNING! RED H" is partially visible on the right. Below the banner, the Sportingbet logo is on the left, followed by the text "Free \$50 Bet for new Canadian customers" in the center, and a red "Bet Now" button on the right.

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