

Conversation with a few chameleons

BY URI DROMI

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Bashar al Assad, the president of Syria, follows the footsteps of his father Hafez al Assad in showing the West a peaceful face while hosting in Syria the leaders of terrorist organizations and dancing with Iran. Therefore, if a summit meeting in Damascus would have brought together Assad, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Hamas leader-in-exile Haled Mashal, it would probably sound like this:

Assad: Gentlemen, thanks for coming. Coffee? Tea? You must taste my favorite baklava.

Ahmadinejad: Let's get to business first. What's this nonsense about you flirting with the Americans?

Assad: Well, I have no other choice. This guy Obama is serious, not like the previous ones, who just talked.

Mashal: Isn't he one of us? Hussein, and all that?

Assad: Many Americans believe that, but I don't. By the way, [Sen. George] Mitchell is here in Damascus, and I will have to see him soon.

Nasrallah: Well, this one is surely an Arab. His mother was born in Lebanon.

Assad: Apparently he is not the only Lebanese who betrayed the Arab cause.

Nasrallah: What? You're referring to me?

Assad: Shut up and sit down. With your crazy act in 2006, you provoked the Israelis to clobber Lebanon again, and now you got most of the Lebanese hating you for this.

Nasrallah: And you? The way you got rid of [Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq] al-Hariri is outrageous. This was the work of an amateur. You brought an international tribunal on us, and now we have egg on our face. Ah, your late father knew how to do things right. Remember Bashir Gemayel in 1982? Once he was elected president, your father, a real pro,

sent him a car bomb and boom! Gone, no fingerprints. Perfect.

Assad: I did al-Hariri? It was you, [expletive]. And tell me, big mouth, how did you get here anyway? I saw you hiding in your bunker for the last four years, scared [expletive] of the Israelis.

Nasrallah: I left a double behind.

Ahmadinejad: Like Saddam Hussein.

All: Let Allah the Merciful rest his soul in peace.

A moment of silence, then an outburst of wild laughter.

Mashal: Gentlemen, can we get serious for a moment? I thought that we were gathered here to discuss how to torpedo the peace talks between the so-called "Palestinian Authority" and Israel.

Assad: Indeed. Shame on our Palestinian brothers. After all we have done for them.

Ahmadinejad: Excuse me, but what exactly have you done for them? I, at least, am building a nuke so I can destroy Israel. But you? You only gave the Palestinians hot air. No wonder they feel they can only trust themselves.

Assad: Not true. We helped them a lot. For example, we closed the Palestinian refugees in Syria and Lebanon in their camps, and never allowed them to settle here and live like human beings. By doing it, we kept the refugee problem alive and helped the Palestinians always remain the underdog.

Mashal: You certainly did that. But I was thinking about more practical steps. For example, why don't you say yes to Mitchell and enter peace talks with Israel? It will divert the attention of the Israelis from the Palestinian track, and when the desperate Palestinians start their intifada, you pull out of the talks. This is what your father would have done.

Assad: My father again!

Nasrallah: Or good old Yasser Arafat. We all thanked the Israelis when they kicked him out of Lebanon in 1982, but he knew better than most of us how to mix terror with diplomacy and bluff everybody.

Mashal: Mr. President, I have to admit, in one way you're much better than your father. He would never let someone leave a meeting to go to the toilets. May I be excused?

Assad: Sure. Let me take you there. He once told me he made [former

Secretary of State Warren] Christopher sit with him for eight hours.

Assad and Mashal leave.

Nasrallah: Quick, brother, tell me about your bomb. When will it be ready?

Ahmedinejad: Soon, brother, soon.

Nasrallah: Alhamdulillah, praise to G_d. It's about time that we strike at Israel.

Ahmedinejad: Israel? You're out of your mind? You think I'm doing all this to hit Israel?

Nasrallah: But I heard you saying --

Ahmedinejad: Brother, how can you be so stupid? You think I'll mess with Israel so that they bomb Iran back to the Stone Age? I need the nuke to suppress those Sunni infidels, the Assads, the Abdullahs, the Mubaraks. You think someone in Tel Aviv is nervous? Go to Riyadh, Amman, Cairo and Doha. Shhhh, they're coming back.

Assad: Brothers, more coffee?

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