

Lost in translation

Experts confirm that Iran's president did not call for Israel to be 'wiped off the map'. Reports that he did serve to strengthen western hawks.



-
- **Jonathan Steele**
 - guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 14 June 2006 07.49 EDT
 - [Article history](#)

My recent [comment piece](#) explaining how Iran's president was badly misquoted when he allegedly called for Israel to be "wiped off the map" has caused a welcome little storm. The phrase has been seized on by western and Israeli hawks to re-double suspicions of the Iranian government's intentions, so it is important to get the truth of what he really said.

I took my translation - "the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time" - from the indefatigable Professor Juan Cole's [website](#) where it has been for several weeks.

But it seems to be mainly thanks to the Guardian giving it prominence that the New York Times, which was one of the first papers to misquote Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, came out on Sunday with a defensive piece attempting to justify its reporter's original "wiped off the map" translation. (By the way, for Farsi speakers the original version is available [here](#).)

Joining the "off the map" crowd is David Aaronovitch, a columnist on the Times (of London), who [attacked](#) my analysis yesterday. I won't waste time on him since his knowledge of Farsi is as minimal as that of his Latin. The poor man thinks the plural of casus belli is casi belli, unaware that casus is fourth declension with the plural casus (long u).

The New York Times's Ethan Bronner and Nazila Fathi, one of the paper's Tehran staff, make a more [serious case](#). They consulted several sources in Tehran. "Sohrab Mahdavi,

one of Iran's most prominent translators, and Siamak Namazi, managing director of a Tehran consulting firm, who is bilingual, both say 'wipe off' or 'wipe away' is more accurate than 'vanish' because the Persian verb is active and transitive," Bronner writes.

The New York Times goes on: "The second translation issue concerns the word 'map'. Khomeini's words were abstract: 'Sahneh roozgar.' Sahneh means scene or stage, and roozgar means time. The phrase was widely interpreted as 'map', and for years, no one objected. In October, when Mr Ahmadinejad quoted Khomeini, he actually misquoted him, saying not 'Sahneh roozgar' but 'Safheh roozgar', meaning pages of time or history. No one noticed the change, and news agencies used the word 'map' again."

This, in my view, is the crucial point and I'm glad the NYT accepts that the word "map" was not used by Ahmadinejad. (By the way, the Wikipedia entry on the controversy gets the NYT wrong, claiming falsely that Ethan Bronner "concluded that Ahmadinejad had in fact said that Israel was to be wiped off the map".)

If the Iranian president made a mistake and used "safheh" rather than "sahneh", that is of little moment. A native English speaker could equally confuse "stage of history" with "page of history". The significant issue is that both phrases refer to time rather than place. As I wrote in my original post, the Iranian president was expressing a vague wish for the future. He was not threatening an Iranian-initiated war to remove Israeli control over Jerusalem.

Two other well-established translation sources confirm that Ahmadinejad was referring to time, not place. The version of the October 26 2005 speech put out by the Middle East Media Research Institute, based on the Farsi text released by the official Iranian Students News Agency, says: "This regime that is occupying Qods [Jerusalem] must be eliminated from the pages of history." (NB: not "wiped". I accept that "eliminated" is almost the same, indeed some might argue it is more sinister than "wiped", though it is a bit more of a mouthful if you are trying to find four catchy and easily memorable words with which to incite anger against Iran.)

MEMRI (its text of the speech is available [here](#)) is headed by a former Israeli military intelligence officer and has sometimes been attacked for alleged distortion of Farsi and Arabic quotations for the benefit of Israeli foreign policy. On this occasion they supported the doveish view of what Ahmadinejad said.

Finally we come to the BBC monitoring service which every day puts out hundreds of highly respected English translations of broadcasts from all round the globe to their subscribers - mainly governments, intelligence services, thinktanks and other specialists. I approached them this week about the controversy and a spokesperson for

the monitoring service's marketing unit, who did not want his name used, told me their original version of the Ahmadinejad quote was "eliminated from the map of the world".

As a result of my inquiry and the controversy generated, they had gone back to the native Farsi-speakers who had translated the speech from a voice recording made available by Iranian TV on October 29 2005. Here is what the spokesman told me about the "off the map" section: "The monitor has checked again. It's a difficult expression to translate. They're under time pressure to produce a translation quickly and they were searching for the right phrase. With more time to reflect they would say the translation should be "eliminated from the page of history".

Would the BBC put out a correction, given that the issue had become so controversial, I asked. "It would be a long time after the original version", came the reply. I interpret that as "probably not", but let's see.

Finally, I approached Iradj Bagherzade, the Iranian-born founder and chairman of the renowned publishing house, IB Tauris. He thought hard about the word "roozgar". "History" was not the right word, he said, but he could not decide between several better alternatives "this day and age", "these times", "our times", "time".

So there we have it. Starting with Juan Cole, and going via the New York Times' experts through MEMRI to the BBC's monitors, the consensus is that Ahmadinejad did not talk about any maps. He was, as I insisted in my original piece, offering a vague wish for the future.

A very last point. The fact that he compared his desired option - the elimination of "the regime occupying Jerusalem" - with the fall of the Shah's regime in Iran makes it crystal clear that he is talking about regime change, not the end of Israel. As a schoolboy opponent of the Shah in the 1970's he surely did not favour Iran's removal from the page of time. He just wanted the Shah out.

The same with regard to Israel. The Iranian president is undeniably an opponent of Zionism or, if you prefer the phrase, the Zionist regime. But so are substantial numbers of Israeli citizens, Jews as well as Arabs. The anti-Zionist and non-Zionist traditions in Israel are not insignificant. So we should not demonise Ahmadinejad on those grounds alone.

Does this quibbling over phrases matter? Yes, of course. Within days of the Ahmadinejad speech the then Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, was calling for Iran to be expelled from the United Nations. Other foreign leaders have quoted the map phrase. The United States is piling pressure on its allies to be tough with Iran.

Let me give the last word to Juan Cole, with whom I began. "I am entirely aware that Ahmadinejad is hostile to Israel. The question is whether his intentions and capabilities would lead to a military attack, and whether therefore pre-emptive warfare is prescribed. I am saying no, and the boring philology is part of the reason for the no."

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Szwagier

14 June 2006 1:00PM

- An unreserved "Hooray" for an article in which someone really has done their homework. Now we can get rid of this "wiped off the map" slander once and for all.

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Platonic

14 June 2006 1:04PM

- Agreed. Let's leave all that "wiped off the map" stuff to Hamas, who do it with so much more panache.

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Stanislaw

14 June 2006 1:05PM

- Hah hah hah. "Wipe away" rather than "wipe out." Big difference. I now feel so much better about Iran building a nuclear weapon. I cant believe this guy is actually quoting Juan Cole. Hitchens did a good job of dismantling the old bag a long time ago, making him look like a clown. His foreign language skills arent very good either. What's next, that Amhedinijab is just "misunderstood" on the Holocaust?

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Stanislaw

14 June 2006 1:12PM

- ""With more time to reflect they would say the translation should be "eliminated from the page of history"". That's even worse. What we ave in Jonathan Steele is a man talking commenting on a subject over his head. If someone said to me "I'm going to chop your head off", I wouldnt spend that much of my time wondering whether "to chop your head off" is a destination rather than a threat. This is the most bad faith piece of work I've read in the Guardian for a long long time, and that's saying something.

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Arbiter

14 June 2006 1:19PM

- Well written article. Those of us who have experience in the field know that 'translation' is often used as part of the Psyops Programme.
<http://www.iwar.org.uk/psyops/resources/iraq/mind-games.htm>

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MerkinOnParis



14 June 2006 1:26PM

- Toadalone, I am a Philologist and managed, with some difficulty, to translate Stan's tripe. "Wif mo'e time t'refleck they'd say th' translashun sh'd be "eliminated fum th' page of histo'y"". Thet's even wo'se. Whut in tarnation we ave in Jon-Boy Steele is a man talkin' commentin' on a subjeck on over his haid. Eff'n someone said t'me "ah's a-gonna chop yer haid off", ah w'dnt spend that much of mah time wonnerin' whether "to chop yer haid off" is a destinashun rather than a threat. This hyar is the dawgoned-est bad faif piece of wawk I've read in th' Guardian fo' a long long time, an' thass sayin' sumpin.

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MeFinny2

14 June 2006 1:29PM

- Let's hope (forlornly, I suppose) that this mistranslation won't come up again from some of the poorly-read (i.e. Daily Mail reading) unfortunates that sometimes inhabit this blog. I won't hold my breath, though.

In addition to that, however, it should also be noted how MEMRI use the phrase "Stain of Disgrace" to mean Israel. That is wrong, as far as I can see, because the word "regime" is used for every other instance of Israel apart from the one they claim also means Israel. It seems obvious to me that "stain of disgrace" means occupation, immorality, and the disgrace and humiliation of Muslims.

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Tomahawk

14 June 2006 1:31PM

- What's the betting that Steele was one of those people who insisted that Bush really *did* mean a 'Crusade' when he said 'Crusade' a few years ago?

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Molasses

14 June 2006 1:36PM

- Whatever the precise nature of the translation - aren't we splitting hairs? Whether the 'regime occupying Jerusalem is to be wiped from the pages of history' or Israel is to be wiped from the map' seems to me to be pretty much the same thing. Either way Ahmadinejad is calling for Israel's destruction as a political entity.

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RobSterling

14 June 2006 1:43PM

- You're missing the point, Molasses: British lefties also want Israel to be destroyed. They just want it done politely.

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goodenough

14 June 2006 1:53PM

- Are western hawks really so out of line being concerned about these comments either way? Does it only take a 'hawk' to be concerned? If this is the best thing we can think to say about Iran's president, hawks and doves both should be casting a wary eye.

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frothwrath

14 June 2006 2:02PM

- There's an important issue here. Ahmadinejad's comments have been used by Western leaders, in particular the usual suspects Bush and Blair, as justification for fierce anti-Iranian rhetoric. Now, when someone in that position gets a transcript or a report of a foreign leader's speech, and sees something as important as this, surely the first thing to do is get a translator in and make sure that the meaning and tone have been accurately translated,

and if they are difficult to translate, get an explanation of them. It is either irresponsible or opportunistic for Bush, Blair etc to use a mistranslation to stir up trouble in the way they did. I'm afraid we're back to the same question as we had with Blair's '45 minute' claim - did he know that referred only to battlefield weapons, and not WMD, and if he did not know, why did he not take the trouble to find out?

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quirky

14 June 2006 2:05PM

- I too had to laugh when Jonathan Steele corrected David Aaronovitch's Latin. What a snob! Is this what your Classical education has led to: hubris? Well, at least some of your links were very interesting - including that Times article by David A., and the Memri transcript. Don't you get it yet? - it's clear that the Iranian PM and the mullahs are totally fixated on removing Israel from the map, and the accuracy of a word here or there is immaterial. I believe the Romans would call it a red herring (heringus ruberis ? - can you help me out, Jonathan - my Latin is poor)...

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seanusher

14 June 2006 2:11PM

- So we risk going to war or pseudo war over a badly translated speech, in the same way as we went to war in Iraq over badly interpreted intelligence. Does anyone see a pattern here? The west and Israel interpret things, such as speeches, intelligence and international law in a manner that suits them, which leaves many of us, including the authors of those speeches and laws, baffled.

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memory

14 June 2006 2:12PM

- Mistranslations can be disastrous. Apparently after the US had threatened the terrorist attack on Hiroshima the Japanese replied with a word meaning "no comment" it was translated to mean rejection and the rest is nuclear holocaust.

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bocajuniper

14 June 2006 2:13PM

- This piece is interesting for the degree to which it reflects the information sandstorm around us. The sheer size and activity of the blogosphere that feeds off the global media now means events are subject to unprecedented scrutiny. So much so that it's becoming harder and harder to say or conclude anything with any certainty.

This process also tends to undermine, even negate the impact of reported events. It was deeply troubling the first time I read about Ahmadinejad's speech. Reams of digital content later it seems little more than a motif for the man's international outlook.

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boldscot

14 June 2006 2:18PM

- Bush said Crusade, and he meant it as 'Crusade'.
<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040920/carroll> HawkieBaby must be one of the few who doesn't believe it.

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Molasses

14 June 2006 2:18PM

- PRECON - however good we are at English comprehension - you still haven't explained the material difference between 'wiped off the map' and 'the regime occupying Jerusalem should be wiped from the pages of history.' I can use either one and still arrive at - Israel should be eliminated as a political entity. Israel is defined by the fact it is a Jewish state. Ahmadinejad wants that to change hence he wants Israel to be wiped of the map/page/history/whatever.

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hebrew

14 June 2006 2:20PM

- memory

"Good for you Carmilla. If you were a Palestinian Muslim or Christian whose ancestors had lived in Palestine for 1000s of years and were expelled by the zionists you wouldnt be able to put a foot on that land now"

Exactly as jews who were expelled from Iran (and actually all the other who never've been in there) can't set their foot there. You need to refresh you memory memory - there is an armed conflict going on there.

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GarryS

14 June 2006 2:42PM

- As usual any mention of Prof. Cole causes some to instantly dismiss the views expressed. These people, presumably having not actually bothered to read Cole's views, appear to be blissfully unaware that he has, amongst other things said that Ahmadinejad is guilty of "wilfull ignorance on a Himalayan scale" and has said that "Ahmadinejad's hostility to Israel and his Holocaust denial and bigotry are beneath contempt". He's also

called him a "little shit" which is something of a break from the traditional language of academia but a fair enough description.

Do these statements, easily available on Cole's website, stop certain people implying that he has sympathies with Ahmadinejad? No.

It is a sad state of affairs when anyone who expresses any sort of dissent concerning US foreign policy can be smeared with allegations of apologism, sympathy and support for America's "enemies". Those who willingly play along with the US right's attempt to play the man rather than the ball might ask themselves why they must resort to such tactics.

It's a cliché to say it but it's all a bit 1984 and not at all compatible with respecting the right to free speech in a democratic society.

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SunnyCloudy



14 June 2006 2:43PM

- These discussions seem to go round and round in circles to be honest.

I for one find the article really important and appreciate the pain the author has gone through to verify the real meaning.

It's important because in our globalised world its increasingly easy to misunderstand others and use that to justify aggression.

But Jonathan Steele, I have a question: Presumably the Iranian President has since read western news reports where he is quoted as wanting to wipe Israel off the map. Surely someone has said that his words are being twisted out of context, in which case he should have clarified them since?

Nevertheless, the point here is that we have to be careful of our political leaders using mis-translated texts to justify their foreign policy or start a war. The Iranian President may be a very loathsome character but that's no excuse to start a war and kill innocent people in the Middle East and spread even more instability.

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tarpaulin

14 June 2006 2:46PM

- "my apologies tarpaulin - I assumed that you were a bored teflhead trying to make themselves sound intellectual"

Oh I've done a bit of TEFL/TESL/ELT or whatever acronym you prefer in my time. But we never got that far. Besides, modern teaching styles tend to take the view that, while learning grammar and grammatical terminology are useful in a way, it doesn't always help, and is insufficient if unsupported by lots of practice in as "realistic" situations as the classroom can muster. Awful stuff, gimme grammar any day :)

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SunnyCloudy

14 June 2006 2:47PM



- And to back up what Garry S said above - Francis its a bit lame of you to first say you found it difficult to read past when Jonathan

Steele points out David A's bad translation (why, is he a friend or something) and then because he references Juan Cole? Is the fact that Juan Cole a respected professor in Middle Eastern studies not good enough for you, and you think you know something we don't? Why not share the knowledge?

More importantly, why is it that anyone who wants to avoid war on false pretexts is branded as either an admirer of Ahmjawasisname or anti-semitic?

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GarryS

14 June 2006 3:00PM

- On the substantive issue, it seems clear that an attempt is being made to portray Iran as a military threat. The notion is that an Iran with nuclear weapons would indeed "wipe Israel off the map". That is why the phrase has such significance.

I'm in agreement with Prof Cole that Ahmadinejad is a "little shit" and "beneath contempt". And I don't want Iran to have nuclear weapons.

As such, I was heartened to hear Iran's Supreme Leader, the real power in Iran, the man who has the power to declare war and command the armed forces, rule out Iranian recourse to aggressive military action.

He said " We will never start a war. We have no intention of going to war with any government."

Good. I'd love to hear Bush say that too. What are the chances?

Khamenei also said "the other suggestion is that Iran is seeking a nuclear bomb. This is an irrelevant and wrong statement, it is a sheer lie. We do not need a nuclear bomb. We do not have any

objectives or aspirations for which we will need to use a nuclear bomb. We consider using nuclear weapons against Islamic rules..."

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran probably takes his religion really rather seriously and that does raise the question as to whether Iran really does want a nuclear weapon or not.

Of course, the Bush hating MSM have been playing this up by reporting Khamenei's speech under headlines like "Supreme Leader Threatens Oil Supplies" and constantly, er, ignoring that part of what he said and concentrating instead on what he said he'd do if his country was attacked. Eh? That can't be right, can it...

These are worrying times.

(Link to translation of Khamenei's speech:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/5045990.stm).

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toadalone

14 June 2006 3:01PM

- "1) The first refers to Israel - including, by implication, all Israeli people and institutions, maybe even buildings; the second refers to a regime currently ruling Israel." But the "regime" which rules Israel is democracy (people's rule), so how can you "wipe" it without wipping people?"

Easy again - through the peoples' opinions changing. Again, taking the most favourable interpretation possible - or maybe, better, completely uncoupling the argument about what the key phrase means from the other argument about what sort of guy Ahmadinejad is - the first means regime change. Which could

happen through the Israeli people voting for someone different, or the US ceasing to subsidise the Israeli economy to such an extent.

Steele also points out that the truer translation doesn't imply agency - it doesn't imply "must be vanished" i.e. "someone should vanish it, maybe me and my nukes", but "must vanish, in some way or another: because I don't like it, I'd like that to happen".

I'm not claiming that Ahmadinejad is a good guy; just that the phrase "wiped off the map", though idiomatic, implies active, violent action. Coming from the leader of a nation, it would be downright scary - if it were actually what he said.

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Francis Sedgemore

14 June 2006 3:02PM

- "As usual any mention of Prof. Cole causes some to instantly dismiss the views expressed."

You have a point, but the reason for the dismissal of Cole is that he's a academic who so often engages in the kind of polemic employed by political commentators who haven't a clue what they're talking about. He loses credibility for this reason, not the perceived rights or wrongs of his expert arguments.

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SunnyCloudy



14 June 2006 3:19PM

- Francis - so let me get this straight. Juan Cole gets annoyed, more than frequently, at the way his words are twisted out of context or the intense stupidity in the way discussions about the Middle East are carried out in the media, and lashes out sometimes. Hence he should be ignored and has little credibility? That makes no sense at all. He may become polemic but we should also consider that at least his opinions are based on solid academic knowledge and are much more likely to be rigorous than that of George Bush.

By threatening nuclear war we constantly play into the hands of the mad clerics in Iran and end up isolating the more liberal clerics as well as the huge liberal Iranian population.

I don't really foresee a war with Iran happening to be honest. Not even because I don't think TB and GB want one but because they know the kind of madness it would unleash in the Middle East in response would be unprecedented. But still, people seem to want to play this game of upmanship to no real benefit. I don't see the point.

Yes he is a loathesome and anti-semitic bigot who I'd have no problems punching the lights out of in a dark alley. But that's not a good enough reason to try and annihilate thousands of people in the area.

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DanielSimpson

14 June 2006 3:20PM

- This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our community standards. Replies may also be deleted.

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quirky

14 June 2006 3:36PM

- It's also worth stressing that the mullahs stated that losing 3 million or more of their population would be worth it to destroy the Zionist entity. If Israel hit back after an Iranian first strike, it would still be finished as a country, whereas the chances of Iran surviving a few nukes are far greater.

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quirky

14 June 2006 3:40PM

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agitpapa

14 June 2006 3:40PM

- Mr Steele's turgid bromide splits hairs that Ahmedinitwit doesn't even know he has. The harebrained demagogue's mastery of words is on a par with that of his sparring partner George Dumbya.

Whether it's sahfieh-i roozgar or sahneh-i roozgar, Ahmedinitwit would not hesitate to nuke Israel if he could, and, I imagine, vice-versa. The point is, even seriously crazy people like the Pakis haven't used their nukes against their mortal enemies, because India simply happens to have a lot more of them.

Ahmedinitwit and his ayatollah pals haven't been creaming off Iran's oil receipts all these years to see all their hard-stolen loot burn up in the mushroom cloud of a Jericho missile. They will sent millions of youths off to die at the drop of a hat, but would never risk being at the receiving end of Israeli nuclear payback.

What the little runt wants is the freedom of action that nuke-wielding rogue states have when they're out for more lebensraum, as Iran is. The ayatollahs have robbed Iran blind and are in a serious economic fix. Their situation is similar to Saddam's after the Iran-Iraq war, when he attacked Kuwait out of desperation. They need to rob somebody's bank, and they need the nukes to keep the cops off their tail.

Those most apprehensive in face of Iran's dealings with AQ Khan and its secret nuke program are the Gulf States, who know that once Iran is finished picking the bones of Iraq (which it already occupys by proxy), it will come after them.

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wascia

14 June 2006 3:48PM

- General Jack D. Ripper: Your Commie has no regard for human life. Not even his own. ----- President Merkin Muffley: You're talking about mass murder, General, not war! - General "Buck" Turgidson: Mr. President, I'm not saying we wouldn't get our hair mussed. But I do say no more than ten to twenty million killed, tops. Uh, depending on the breaks.

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PaxVeritas

14 June 2006 3:54PM

- it would appear that as latin declensions were being pounded into the pedantic mr. steele brain, a certain measure of common sense was forced out. for when our good grammarian asks: "Does this quibbling over phrases matter?" the true answer is rather different than his. we know no more about the passions, calculations, and intentions in the depths of a'jad's grey matter now than before. and even if we did, we would need to know a lot more about the internal balances of power than in iran than than the farsi farce can reveal. it is at this juncture quite suffice to surmise that the ruling clique in iran has decided that confrontation with the Gulf Hegemon is in their interests. how far they may wish to push that confrontation is their prerogative and within their control, and will likely inform many a post for a long time to come. the rest is as irrelevant as latin declension.

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PaxVeritas

14 June 2006 3:57PM

- ooops. before mr. steele gets his ruler out and whacks me, i better note that my "clique" was a poor spelling attempt at "clique." apologies.

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hebrew

14 June 2006 4:02PM

- toadalone

"Easy again - through the peoples' opinions changing. Again, taking the most favourable interpretation possible - or maybe, better, completely uncoupling the argument about what the key phrase means from the other argument about what sort of guy Ahmadinejad is - the first means regime change. Which could happen through the Israeli people voting for someone different, or the US ceasing to subsidise the Israeli economy to such an extent."

No, i'm sorry, that's not really so easy. If Israeli people vote for someone different (which is exactly what they deed btw) it's government change - not regime. The regime is the same - democracy.

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agitpapa

14 June 2006 4:05PM

- "the ruling cliche in Iran?" French ain't for amateurs, friend. You may end up making a veritass of yourself.

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hebrew

14 June 2006 4:07PM

- wascia

"It is not exactly a democracy since it imposes its state power on people who are not allowed to have a say in how it's run." If you mean Palestinians so they live in Palestine and vote in Palestinian elections. Don't start all this again.

"But even if it did allow a say but persecuted some people unjustly, it would still be an undesirable regime, though formally democratic." What does that mean?

"For anyone who takes the bible seriously, there are precedents, I believe, for bad regimes attracting the wrath of God, even though most people supported the regime. And the wrath of God has been described as genocidal, sometimes. Luckily, I don't take that stuff seriously, but there you go."

And what does this mean?

You lost me completely...

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quirky

14 June 2006 4:08PM

- Boldscot: Och aye the noo ! I didn't realize you saved all my previous comments. Yes I remember you equating female genital mutilation with circumcision and you're still sore. What's the matter, scottie : have you just been cut?

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LordSummerisle

14 June 2006 4:21PM

- The phrase "the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time" worries me just as greatly even if it sounds a bit more poetic.

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wascia

14 June 2006 4:24PM

- "If you mean Palestinians so they live in Palestine and vote in Palestinian elections." -- but they are still subject to the Israeli state's power, so they should be able to determine that state's policies.

"What does that mean?" -- I mean that one cannot excuse a democratic state's unjust actions. Democracy is the most desirable political system because, in my view, it allows the

virtue of the citizens to be expressed most fully. But one does need virtue as well.

"And what does this mean?" -- I mean that similar arguments apply if you are a religious person. In fact, from a religious position, the democratic character of a state would count for even less when it comes to evaluating its desirability.

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enoughbushit

14 June 2006 4:27PM

- There is obviously a Swift-Boat style propaganda campaign against Ahmedinajed - the widespread rumour that he was one of the Iranians who held the Americans hostage in their embassy based on a "grainy picture," that he declared the desire for Israel to be "wiped off the map" as detailed here, not to forget the recent brouhaha over the fiction that Iran is forcing its minority Jews and Christians to wear yellow and red badges, invoking the horror of Nazism, to name but three. This is a co-ordinated effort, and while corrections may be subsequently posted, the campaign's aim of inflicting maximum image damage through lies and disinformation is lethally effective, as in the swiftboating of Kerry. This bears the imprimatur of the Bush administration to paint Iran as a rogue country headed by a lunatic, genocidal leader, all the better to prepare us for the inhumane sanctions or bombs to follow. Makes me sick to the stomach that this dirty tactic *works*, maybe this is what "freedom of speech" is about.

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hebrew

14 June 2006 4:34PM

- wascia "but they are still subject to the Israeli state's power, so they should be able to determine that state's policies."

Well, iraqis and afganis write now are subject to US state power, so you suggest they should be able to determine Us policies? In a conflict each side is subject to others side policies.

"I mean that one cannot excuse a democratic state's unjust actions. Democracy is the most desirable political system because, in my view, it allows the virtue of the citizens to be expressed most fully. But one does need virtue as well."

I don't undrestand how is that related to my last post.

"I mean that similar arguments apply if you are a religious person. In fact, from a religious position, the democratic character of a state would count for even less when it comes to evaluating its desirability"

Again, what is the connection to the discussion?

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MerkinOnParis

14 June 2006 4:40PM

- <http://www.forbes.com/work/feeds/afx/2005/06/24/afx2110388.html>
'Spot' posted a good link. The Americans have finally admitted the torture at Guantanamo.

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NaturalLaw

14 June 2006 4:47PM

- Has Jonathan Steele convinced anyone Mr Holocaust Denial is a good guy who shouldn't be 'demonized'.

This article is a farce. Self-hating leftists who flirt with anti-semitism and Bush Derangement Syndrome are a threat to us all.

Executing gays, hanging cheating spouses, human rights abuses, displacing people from their land etc etc etc

What will he have to do to be condemned by the anti-imperial left?

If he says something nice about America I bet you will start laying into him.

Mr Steele, Mr Chamberlain wants 'his peace in our time' speech back.

The Right will not allow you people to let another genocide develop in the name of moral relativism.

Islamists/sectarian Leftists, we are coming for you and your bullshit!

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expansionisbad

14 June 2006 5:08PM

- Naturallaw , I think you are a bid confused between Self loving Israelis , self hating-Jews against Israel's land grab and the Iranians !!

Tell us which people the Iranians displaced from thier land ? Or were you talking about self-Loving Israelis ?!!

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hebrew

14 June 2006 5:11PM

- toadalone

"From this phrase _alone_ you could conclude that he'd be perfectly happy (or at least happier) if Israelis democratically elected a government that e.g. retreated back to the 1967 borders of Israel."

Oh, c'mon... He said by himself that Muslims should regard as their duty to "liberate" all Palestine (not the occupied territories but ALL Palestine) and that any muslim who agrees to any settlement with israel is traitor.

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toadalone



14 June 2006 5:22PM

- hebrew: "Oh, c'mon... He said by himself that Muslims should regard as their duty to "liberate" all Palestine (not the occupied territories but ALL Palestine) and that any muslim who agrees to any settlement with israel is traitor." Not going to ask you for chapter and verse on that one, because what you attribute to him is probably true. So he's a Muslim who objects to Israel? Hardly unusual. No more worthy of attention than Bush's gung-ho pronouncements on Iraq. Unlike Iraq, Israel has proved itself perfectly capable of defending itself in various ways.

I'm not trying to prove that A. is no threat to Israel. Just to defend Steele's point: that the Godsend of a soundbite about him wanting to "wipe Israel off the map", implying "declare war now or soon, with the nuclear weapons I'm supposedly developing" is a complete fabrication.

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hebrew

14 June 2006 5:30PM

- enoughbulshit

I'm sorry but after your tirade that Ahmadinejad is in fact more honest respectable and smart than Bush and the excuses you had found for Zarkawi, i have a difficulty to take you seriously.

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hebrew

14 June 2006 5:37PM

- toadalone

"Not going to ask you for chapter and verse on that one, because what you attribute to him is probably true." Thanks

"So he's a Muslim who objects to Israel? Hardly unusual." No, in fact his objection to Israel is quite unusual even for Muslim - Egypt and Jordan are Muslims also, Saudi Arabia though pays lip service to Palestinian but doesn't make statements like that. And there are more examples.

"Unlike Iraq, Israel has proved itself perfectly capable of defending itself in various ways."

Well, that's perfectly true - i always said that all his idiotic statements worth dog's barking: what can he do anyway? Bomb Israel? Like Israel doesn't have nukes to bomb him back?

But who's declaring war on him anyway? Meanwhile all the talk is about sanctions (which no one will of course apply cause he swims in oil).

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reddoodlebug

14 June 2006 5:43PM

- "But the "regime" which rules Israel is democracy (people's rule), so how can you "wipe" it without wipping people?"

Pity about the people who are not allowed to vote in this 'democracy'. The 750,000 Palestinian Arabs who were expelled

and made stateless in 1948, and their descendents, of course. These descendants now, by the way, amount to several million.

If Israel was really 'democratic' then they would be allowed to vote. But if they were, the outcome of elections would be rather different. And Israel as an ethnically exclusionist Jewish state would be no more.

Israel is 'democratic' in a similar way to apartheid South Africa. Democracy is only for those deemed worthy of it, thus an artificial majority is constructed. Those excluded from this 'democracy' get the jackboot.

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