

The Biden Administration Policy- Israel's War – Causes and Implications

By Josef Olmert, PH.D.

The current war involving Israel as of 7 October is NOT the Gaza war only. Israel is fighting on four fronts: against Hamas in Gaza, the Houthis of Yemen, pro-Iranian militias, and, in fact, full-fledged armies in Lebanon and Syria. In recent weeks, Israel has had to face a new front – a war of words conducted by the Biden Administration against Israel. Yes, Israel has faced up to a consistent, focused, and well-orchestrated campaign, which is causing enormous damage to Israel at one of its darkest, most difficult times. The ultimate goal behind this campaign is to prevent Israel from fulfilling its stated aim of "total destruction" of Hamas to use the unsatisfactory results from the Israeli standpoint to achieve Pax Americana in the Middle East.

This assertion may surprise many, if not most of my readers, as is it not the fact that the Biden Administration vetoes anti-Israel resolutions in the UN Security Council? Is it not the fact that the administration supplies ammunition and spare parts to the IDF? Lastly, is it not the case that the President gave a truly moving speech on 10 October in support of Israel? In fact, all this is true and important. Still, the PR or, more bluntly, the propaganda front IS vitally important as well during the war and would become crucially important when the current situation comes to an end.

Here is a description of what happens, why it does, and where it may lead the state of Israel, the Jewish people, and the relationships between the two countries. I must

emphasize an important point before dealing with this paper's main topic: The following is NOT an endorsement of Donald Trump as the next President.

THE GRADUAL DETERIORATION OF THE ISRAEL-US RELATIONSHIPS

Prior to 7 October, the overall state of the once "special relationships" between Israel and the US was shaken for some important reasons, which will be discussed but not profoundly analyzed in this piece. The US is experiencing a demographic change; some will say a transformative change, which is not favorable to the Jewish community and Israel. Every poll

taken in the US in recent years shows the growing anti-Israel bias among minority, non-white, and non-Christian communities, perhaps only with the exception of Indian-Americans. We see a

consistent trend here in this direction, not an absolute change but one which may be short of any dramatic reversal. The demographic change badly affects the Democratic party, traditionally the home of the minority communities. The Democratic base veers consistently towards the Woke Progressive culture. The Jews, another traditional pro-Democratic community, are getting identified with the old, white party establishment, in fact, with the national, white-dominated socio-economic order. Being a numerically dwindling minority adds up to their growingly diminished role in American public life. A short demographic and politically significant fact -Most American Jews are concentrated in states that overwhelmingly vote Democratic [New York, California] or Republican [Florida], and they, therefore, are no longer the decisive vote there.

The Republican party base is still strongly pro-Israel, but even there, a change is taking place. Young Evangelical Christians are MUCH less supportive of Israel than their elders. I argue also that the MAGA movement, being nativist and isolationist in nature, is NOT favorable to Jews. So, WOKE and MAGA, the two popular, mass-mobilizing political movements in the US, are NOT in tune with the interests and concerns of the Jewish community. Let me say the following. The Golden Age of American Jewry is nearly over. Sad but realistic. Part of it has to do with developments within the Jewish community itself, most significantly the rise of the Tikkun Olam ideology, which to a large extent is a stampede away of Jews from their own particular community, history, and legacy into the hoped-for warm embracing arms of the Non-Jewish Liberal and Progressive movements and it leads to less support for Israel among American Jews, and as it is among Evangelical Christians, especially among the 18-35 years age group. Indeed, third and fourth-generation Americans are generally less attached to their mother countries, and young Jews are not an exception.

The cultural and political changes within the American Jewish community are taking place simultaneously with demographic changes in Israel, which led to the political dominance of the Likud electoral coalition from 1977, a coalition that a majority of American Jews view suspiciously as a contrast to its own scale of values. This is NOT Israel's fault, of course. In a way, it is a testament to its own vibrant democracy. Still, many, too many American Jews cannot digest and accept the changes. It is partly, at least, the fault of an Israeli PM, Binyamin Netanyahu, that the bi-partisan support for Israel, which for a few decades was the main pillar of Israel's standing in the US, is no more. Netanyahu's 15 years in power corresponded with the changes described above in the US, so he is NOT to blame for them. The problem is that while realizing the existence of the changes and their potential negative ramifications with regard to Israel,

he intentionally and consistently allied himself with the Republican party. Netanyahu had to do his very utmost to slow down the process but did the opposite. His speech in Congress in March 2015 against Obama was a master case of political and diplomatic stupidity.

Israel's strong position in American public opinion was based not only on a sense of commonality of strategic, military, and political interests. These were important features, but there was another no less important, probably even more important feature – the commonality of moral values, the sense that unlike some other of America's allies which enjoyed strong, multidimensional American support, Israel was the closest in the minds of many Americans to what, in their eyes, was the type of state and society that America had to support. In sum, Israel was "like us", whereas its enemies were not. Successive American administrations repeatedly emphasized this point, much less so some Democratic administrations like Carter's and especially Obama's. Under the latter, it became evident that there was a concerted effort to undermine this so significant aspect of the relationships, and with it came the inevitable consequences of gradually reduced public support for Israel. Obama continued and intensified this process, which was so notable in the educational system, including high schools. Here is where the BDS movement became SO successful. It provided a nationwide organizational infrastructure to the anti-Israel forces. It was also legitimized by the academic campaigns against Israel. An entire generation of American students were subjected to systematic and effective anti-Israel indoctrination. The opposition to Israel focused on the groups in society that have more clout, political and cultural, than the groups in society that were and are still more pro-Israel. Consequently, in the last 15-20 years, Israel lost MUCH of the moral advantage it had over the Palestinians.

THE CURRENT WAR — THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION BECAME OBSESSED WITH ISRAEL

The events of 7 October found the US surprised to the core, but the sense of bewilderment did not last for long. On 10 October, President Biden delivered an emotional speech in support of Israel and the Jewish people. A week later, he arrived for a short visit to Israel, again full of gestures of genuine support and empathy. Clearly, the fate of the hostages held by Hamas, including some with American citizenship, was on top of the messages conveyed. However, other tunes started to emerge, first muted, later very visibly and vocally.

As the war dragged on, the Biden administration expressed the following main point; They were not happy with the sense that Israel was planning an operation lasting up to a year, particularly with the unfolding regional implications. Chief among them is the obvious Iranian involvement. The Biden administration was engaged prior to the war in an effort to reactivate the Iran Nuclear Deal, which Trump withdrew from, but the Iranians did not respond. That, in itself, should have indicated to Biden that Iran was up to trouble, not to reconciliation. Still, he made a strategic decision to evade a military confrontation with Iran at all costs. Netanyahu TALKED for 15 years about such a confrontation but DID very little, and Biden does not want to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Israel. His administration, therefore, put pressure on Israel from day one NOT to respond to Hizballah, in fact, to pursue the same policy towards an Iranian proxy in the North, which failed against another Iranian proxy, Hamas, in the South. At the same time, the administration put pressure on Israel to use the war against Hamas as a step toward an advancement of the American version of the two-state solution. Netanyahu could not agree to any mention of this solution, let alone negotiate it because of his total political dependence on the likes of Ben Gvir and Smotrich. Still, he refrained from presenting any other possible political solution aimed at ending the war. He repeated

here the same mistake that he made after Trump's renunciation of the Iran Nuclear deal, then also offered no alternative other than endless meaningless talking. On the ground, though, the IDF, under his guidance, performed as if Israel had all the time in the world on its hands, completely missing the basic interest of Biden to shorten rather than prolong the conflict. That brings us to the CORE of Biden's policy, and where the gradual process described above of weakening US-ISRAEL relationships played a major role. This is the campaign to portray Israel as anything but an ally "which has common values with us".

The Biden administration made a very simple political calculation. The pressures on them in the US came only from the WOKE movement within the Democratic party, nothing from the Pro Israel community. Yes, there was a very large and impressive show of force of 300,000 Jews in DC, 5 percent of the entire Jewish community in the US, but this was a rally mainly dedicated to the plight of the hostages; a noble cause, but one which was NOT focused on achieving political goals, in line with the Israeli stated desire to "totally destroy" Hamas. While the Jews sufficed themselves with ONE big show of force, the WOKE movement tirelessly worked all over the US. It achieved its strategic goal-The Biden administration gradually adopted their main points and started their own concerted ideological attack on Israel. The only actual difference between the WOKE movement and Biden was tactical; the former called for an immediate ceasefire. Biden advocated a temporary one connected inseparably with the release of hostages. Still, as of the last few days [it is written in the middle of March-J.O], Biden accepted the call for a complete and immediate ceasefire WITHOUT conditioning it on the question of hostages. Let us be clear here-Biden wants a release of the hostages but connects it to a complete and immediate end of the Gaza war-and that is NOT the overall strategic interest of Israel. We mentioned before WOKE alongside MAGA as the two mass mobilization political movements in America these days, and here is the sad truth about MAGA and Israel. MAGA is NOT interested in Israel as its number one priority, far from

it. WOKE, however, does see Israel as their number one priority, and WOKE are relentless and vicious, BUT they win-Biden finally is on their side-here is the most dramatic evidence of that. The President, in his own voice, not just through his attack dogs, like the VP, talks about 30,000 killed Palestinians and does not anymore refer to the Hamas soldiers among them. He unleashed VP HARRIS against Israel deliberately to use her as part of his effort to mobilize the black community to support his reelection campaign. All the signs are that he succeeds. Over 1000 black pastors issued their call for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire. The talk about 30,000 more killed Palestinians IF Israel were to invade RAFAH is again deliberately intended to push Israel away from the "moral" country position to the near pariah state position. Israel is, therefore, under attack on its soft belly and consequently is losing big in terms of public opinion, image, and, more importantly, political clout. This is THE culmination of a process starting years before as was described above.

If we are to give a somewhat colorful description to this abysmal state of affairs-The Arabs of Dearborn win against the Jews of New York. The importance and influence of the American Jewish community is in eclipse, and the Biden administration is effective in its campaign against Israel by taking advantage of this situation. Binyamin Netanyahu is the main immediate target, and he makes ALL the mistakes that make it easier for the Biden administration to almost uninterruptedly pursue their policy. A Democratic administration going after Israel in a year of presidential elections is indeed a precedent. The responsibility for it is NOT Netanyahu's; it is the combination of all the above factors leading to the dramatic weakening of Israel's stature in the US. But from Biden's perspective-what is the endgame?

CAN GAZA LEAD TO A PAX AMERICANA IN THE MIDDLE EAST;

One name comes to mind when we address this pivotal question. That of the late Henry Kissinger. He[as well as his boss Nixon, who supported his strategy] and Biden represent ideological worlds apart, as well as being so different in terms of their personalities. The overall circumstances of the 1973 and 2023-4 wars are also very different, though not without some similarities. One important similarity stands out -both politicians decided after their initial surprise following the start of the wars that they were not expecting to PREVENT ISRAEL from achieving a full, final military victory. In the case of Kissinger and Nixon, it was the pressure on Israel to lift the siege on the Third Egyptian Army. In the case of Biden, it is the pressure on Israel not to invade Rafah. At the same time, the Israeli leadership, not just Netanyahu, claims that without doing that, the Israeli victory in Gaza is not complete. The goal of "total" destruction of Hamas is not achieved. In both cases, the overriding American hope and interest is that the Arab world will recognize and appreciate the American central position in the Middle East as being the ONLY power that can put effective pressure on Israel. It can be argued that the final outcome of Kissinger's policy in 1973-4 was the Camp David Accords and the peace with Egypt, though they were signed under another administration. It is too early to predict what the results of Biden's policy will be these days, but it is not too early to see what the main goals are. First, to use the weakening, not the total destruction of Hamas as an advantage along the road to the two states solution with the Palestinian Authority [PA] under Abbas or somebody else at the helm leading a national Palestinian unity including elements close to Hamas. These elements will be portrayed as the "political" wing of Hamas, not the terroristic one, as if this division REALLY exists. Unlike previous American administrations, which supported the two-state solution either genuinely or just by paying lip service, this administration has taken the step of declaring war on Jewish settlements in the disputed territories as an indication of its seriousness. This is another step they take as part of their campaign against "moral and democratic " Israel. There are Palestinian terrorists in these territories, and there are also Jewish terrorists; in short, it is a moral draw but a major political defeat to Israel.

It may sound surprising to some readers, but the Biden administration, which is often and rightly criticized for being weak and confused about its international policy priorities, shows much more resolve about and against Israel than any of its predecessors, including Obama's. How is it possible?- All explained above. Then there is another goal -isolating Iran, containing it, but not confronting it head-on. It may seem a contradiction whereby the administration encourages Saudi Arabia to get into formal normalization relations with Israel while not discouraging the same Saudi Arabia from reestablishing its full relations with Iran. It is NOT a contradiction-the administration believes that if many Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, will improve and maintain good relations with Israel, it will further isolate Iran. This policy and expectation proved to be a failure until now. Beyond that, it does NOT address the question of the Iranian nuclear program, which is rapidly advancing to the point of no return. At the same time, most attention of the US, Israel, and the Arab world is focused on the Gaza war and the other conflicts connected with it. THIS state of affairs is definitely bad for Israel. It finds Israel at a time of major national predicament, with a government that has near-zero internal and external legitimacy and a greatly weakened and outright timid pro-Israel community in the US.

Wars are very often a catalyst for change, and the current war is NO exception. This is bad news for Israel and the Jewish people.

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