

Everything Old is New Again

The Biden administration is following Obama's failed playbook of appeasing terrorism.



Former U.S. President Barack Obama, flanked by Vice President Joe Biden, delivers a statement on the Iran nuclear agreement in the East Room of the White House on July 14, 2015. (Photo: White House / Pete Souza)

by Shoshana Bryen

It appears that, at least for now, American pressure on Israel has thwarted Israel's militarily achievable goals in Gaza: the defeat of Hamas as a military and governing force, protection of Israel's borders and citizens, and the return of the hostages.

The Biden administration seems to have decided that these goals are incompatible with its interests: A long-term ceasefire, humanitarian aid, no large-scale IDF operation in Rafah and then negotiations for the hostages and the emergence of a Palestinian state.

There are those who explain this policy as based on the administration's domestic political interests. Namely, keeping the anti-Israel left happy and playing to the largely pro-Hamas Arab/Muslim population of Michigan. That's a good story, but it's not the real story.

Back in 2013, Joe Biden was vice president and a large number of Biden administration staff and think-tank pundits were in office as well.

I wrote in [July 2013](#) of Afghanistan and President Barack Obama's "peace process": "For [eighteen months](#), Doha (Qatar) has been the scene of sometimes secret, sometimes leaked U.S. talks with the Taliban – and without the Afghan government."

"But this week, Taliban representatives inaugurated a [large and ornate building](#), complete with a flag and a banner proclaiming the diplomatic office of 'The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.' The 'Islamic Emirate' also released a statement that said, inter alia, that it 'never wants to pose harms (sic) to other countries from its soil, nor will it allow anyone to cause a threat to the security of countries from the soil of Afghanistan,' an apparent overture to the United States. There was an announcement then that the Obama administration would open '[peace and reconciliation](#)' talks with the enemy of our presumed ally, Hamid Karzai.

"In a huff, the Karzai government broke off security talks with the U.S. and denounced the Obama administration for violating what it called 'written assurances' that the Taliban would not be considered a diplomatic entity, and its offices would not resemble an embassy.

“Without confirming the assurances (although *The New York Times* reported that an administration official acknowledged there [was a letter](#) from Obama to Karzai), the administration retreated quickly. [State Department](#) spokesperson Jennifer Psaki said there were no U.S.-Taliban talks scheduled; [Secretary of State \[John\] Kerry](#) said Karzai was ‘justifiably upset’ over the ‘Islamic Emirate’ sign; and the Taliban was induced to remove it.”

To Kerry, it was the sign—not the betrayal—that was the problem.

“The Taliban, understanding that it is winning the political battle, followed last week’s suicide attack that killed 17 Afghans in [an attack](#) on the Supreme Court in Kabul with one that killed [four American soldiers](#) at Bagram Air Base,” I noted. “Then it dangled trade-bait in the form of captured U.S. Marine Bowe Bergdahl for five high-level Gitmo detainees.”

The Taliban had to wait through the Trump administration, but in August 2021, the final chapter of American involvement in Afghanistan was written in disgrace.

I also wrote in [2013](#): “The United States, for its part, has evidently been choosing to ignore open warfare by Hamas against Israel, and insisting instead that the ‘solution’ to the Palestinian problem will be found between Ramallah and Jerusalem (or Tel Aviv, as the administration insists). This view, if nothing else, explains a senior American official claiming to be ‘shocked’ by the latest discovery of [Hamas tunnels burrowed into Israel](#).”

“Why would the United States be shocked by the discovery of a mile-long tunnel 60 feet underground, running 1,500 feet into Israel, and complete with lights and a trolley track? Did the U.S not think Hamas would find a military use for the concrete building slabs Israel was harangued into providing for

'civilian' housing in Gaza by Western 'humanitarian' organizations? Does the U.S. believe that Hamas only built tunnels to import cigarettes and cooking oil to offset the Israel-Egypt blockade?

"Surely the State Department knows that even at the height of the Hamas rocket war, Israel did not permit hunger in Gaza, and that the blockade by Israel off the coast of Gaza existed to protect itself against arms smuggling. The American government could not have thought Hamas had given up trying to capture the next Gilad Shalit for murder or mayhem; Hamas [publicly announced](#) its intention to kidnap more Israeli soldiers and the number of attempts rose in 2013. The ransom Israel paid for Shalit only made the next IDF soldier an even more tempting target.

"Ignoring the war is foolish: it continues apace."

Eleven years later, the new iteration of the Obama administration has learned nothing. It intends, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said, to install the Palestinian Authority as the government of an independent Palestinian state on both sides of Israel.

There may be a reason yet to be announced for Israel to remove troops from southern Gaza. It is unlikely that the ultimate goals have changed. It is more likely that American pressure forced a change in tactics. This is unlikely to end well for Israel or the Palestinian people, both of whom would benefit from the elimination of Hamas.

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