



PERSPECTIVES

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Kerry's Attack on Israel: A Failed Attempt to Divert Attention from Obama's Disastrous Foreign Policy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Secretary of State John Kerry's attack on Israel last week represents a vain attempt to deflect attention from the Obama administration's failed foreign policy. Kerry's fixation on the Palestinian issue explains why Russia, with one-tenth the GDP of the US, has emerged as the winner in Syria against both US and Israeli interests and why Iran, its ally, has come to control two more Arab capitals by proxy. Instead of promoting core US interests, Kerry has squandered efforts on promoting a two-state solution that has failed to materialize since it was first proposed by the Peel Commission eighty years ago. Hopefully, the next administration will give core US interests their due and find creative ways to deal with the fallout of a Palestinian national movement that has failed for 100 years.

In US Secretary of State John Kerry's recent speech, in which he attempted to defend Washington's abstention on the UNSCR resolution against Israeli settlements, he sounded more similar than ever before to the European leaders who reflexively condemn Israel. The similarity is rooted in a predicament shared by both the US under Obama and the EU – a weak and ineffectual foreign policy. Obama's and Kerry's "European" orientation has reduced American influence in world affairs to its lowest point since WWII and most certainly since the Vietnam War.

Just as the Europeans cover up their geostrategic weakness by ganging up on Israel, so too have Obama and Kerry zeroed in on Israel and the Palestinian issue as a means of covering up the abysmal failures of their foreign policy. Unfortunately, Israel is saddled with the costs of those foreign policy failures.

Kerry noted that the US concluded "an historic \$38 billion memorandum of understanding that exceeds any military assistance package the United States

has provided to any country, at any time, and that will invest in cutting-edge missile defense and sustain Israel's qualitative military edge for years to come." True, but he neglected to mention that most of those funds will go to meet the dangers of an aggressive Iranian policy.

Tehran has been emboldened by a \$50-100 billion windfall resulting from the unfreezing of its assets in Western capitals, a bonanza orchestrated by Obama and Kerry. Israel knows full well that much of that windfall will be used to buy Russian state-of-the-art anti-air defense systems. This will make it much more difficult for Israel to attack Iran when it goes nuclear (which it inevitably will). Those systems will also be used to augment Hezbollah's massive missile inventory in southern Lebanon, which is aimed at Israel's major population centers.

Israel is also paying dearly for Obama's debacle in Syria. For the first time since the 1980s, Israel is severely constrained in its mastery over the skies by a strong Russian air force presence in Syria, a state of affairs the Obama administration did nothing to prevent. Incredibly, President Vladimir Putin, the leader of a country with less than half the population of the US and one tenth its GDP, has led a winning Russian-Iranian-Syrian coalition against an ineffectual US. Tensions have only increased among Arabs, Kurds, Turkey, and the US. The Arab-Kurd standoff in Syria runs the risk of driving many Arabs into an alliance with IS.

Kerry's speech might have inadvertently explained why the US failed in Syria. "We have committed our influence and our resources to trying to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict because, yes, it would serve American interests to stabilize a volatile region," he said. But consider the state of the region in 2011 and beyond. How could the Obama administration justify committing so much effort to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when the bloodletting and instability in Syria were one hundred times worse? Or when Iranian allies took over Beirut, where the Iranian/Hezbollah candidate became president? Or when pro-Iranian Houthis took over San'a? Wasn't the formation of an Arab coalition to wage a destructive air war in Yemen the product of an American policy failure?

Kerry naively believes it is Israel's obligation to take incredible risks to appease a failed national movement, which, in 1936, 1947, 1979, 2000, 2007, and 2009, rejected every opportunity it was offered to make peace with the Zionist movement and later the State of Israel.

But he must know through his advisors that the Palestinians have been going through their own civil war for the past ten years. The only reason it is not as bloody as its Syrian counterpart is the presence of Israel, which separates the

Palestinian Authority under Mahmoud Abbas's dictatorial rule from Hamas's Islamist theocracy in Gaza. Both governments excel at brutally suppressing one another's supporters in their respective territories.

In shedding tears over the Palestinians' plight, Kerry cannot dispel the truth that life expectancy in Gaza is a respectable 75 years and electricity is available in almost 100% of homes – a far higher economic welfare rate than that enjoyed by one-third of humanity, including most of tropical Africa. Fifteen thousand Gazans have received critical medical care in Israel's hospitals, just as they receive Israeli electricity (for which they rarely pay).

Kerry informs us that the Arab states are committed to the two-state solution. If so, why did Jordan annex the West Bank when it ruled over the area between 1948 and 1967? Why did Egypt maintain military rule over Gaza during that period? Are they really committed to a Palestinian state, which their mutual nemesis, Hamas, is likely to take over, just as it took Gaza from the PA in 2007?

In 2017, the world will be commemorating 80 years of failure to bring a two-state solution to fruition. Four generations have passed since the Peel Commission, and numerous opportunities have been missed due to Palestinian and Arab intransigence.

It is time to lay the idea of a two-state solution to rest. The US and the international community should be thinking of new solutions. The Palestinian Authority's billions can be diverted, for example, toward the creation of a transnational space linking the West Bank to Jordan and Gaza as well as to the greater Arab world. That is but one avenue worthy of exploration. A world that invented the smartphone and the internet should be able to come up with others.

No amount of doting on the Palestinians can hide the fact that the Obama administration's foreign policy pursuits have been a failure, and no amount of scapegoating Israel will hide the growing force of this assessment in the years to come.

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