



## Mr. Bennett Goes to Washington

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The waning of American influence in the Middle East not only indicates that the world superpower is in retreat, and perhaps even in its twilight—but that Israel’s fate is tied to that retreat.**

Contrary to the hopes of the Israeli left and the fears of the Israeli right, the upcoming meeting between PM Naftali Bennett and President Joe Biden will not deal with the “Palestinian question” and the ways it can be resolved. It is quite possible that the opening the American consulate in East Jerusalem will be raised and pressure may even be brought to bear on the matter, but that would not indicate a reinvigoration of the “peace process.” The Biden administration’s disinterest in the political process, despite its progressive inclinations and bureaucratic composition, was evidenced within months of its inauguration when it cold-shouldered Mahmoud Abbas’s initiation of general Palestinian elections for the first time since 2006.

The current administration does not prioritize the Middle East, and in that sense is very similar to the Trump administration and even the Obama administration. In recent years, the US has been in a clear process of retreat from its role as the “world’s policeman” in favor of an inward-looking approach. Washington is now much less focused on global politics and values, particularly in the difficult neighborhood of the Middle East. If anything, President Biden is focused on China.

The growing US disengagement from the Middle East represents a big problem for Israel, and the shameful withdrawal from Afghanistan is the writing on the wall. The American tiger no longer roars. It is behaving like a world power in retreat—perhaps even entering the twilight of its power—and Israel’s fate is tied to America’s fate.

The last decade-and-a-half have been marked by strategic momentum in terms of Israel's regional status, culminating in the formal signing of the Abraham Accords with the UAE and Bahrain. This success was the result of a common desire to contain the Iranian-led "resistance camp's" steady drive toward regional hegemony. The Abraham Accords were accomplished under the auspices of the Trump administration, which, while seeking to disengage from the region, laid the foundations for a responsible withdrawal in the form of massive economic pressure that nearly brought the imperialist Islamist regime to its knees. That reality is now swiftly changing for the worse as the Biden administration's abandonment of its predecessor's strategy has allowed Tehran to rebound in grand style en route to its transformation into the regional superpower once sanctions against it are lifted.

This is the reality with which Israel must now contend: the waning of American power and the attendant surge of the region's Islamist camp. This will make Israel more isolated at the strategic level and will constrain its maneuverability vis-à-vis these reactionary factors. This has nothing to do with the "Palestinian question" or the resumption of "peace process." Those are secondary issues in comparison to the enormous existential challenges Israel is now facing without any good strategic solutions ready at hand.

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