



The Effects of the Biden Administration's Inconsistent Foreign Policy on Israel

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The United States has steadfastly supported Israel since 1967, wielding significant influence over its allies' policies as a global hegemon. However, Israel's international standing has faltered amid its war with Hamas in Gaza. Concurrently, internal and external pressures have contributed to a waning of support for Israel within the Biden administration, despite President Biden's pro-Israel worldview. The United States has traditionally set the standard for how its allies engage with Israel. However, a shifting U.S. stance has emboldened other nations to adopt anti-Israel policies and rhetoric. This shift has tarnished Israel's reputation among ordinary citizens in these countries and led to a reduction in political, financial, and military support. With President Biden stepping down as the democratic nominee, he in his remaining months in office and his successor in the years to come face the challenge of balancing pro-Israel policies with increasing discontent from a segment of the American voter base. Israel looks to President Biden to continue advocating for its military objectives, including the elimination of Hamas and the release of 120 Israeli hostages in Gaza. Failure to do so may result in further erosion of support from Israel's other allies, a trend already beginning to emerge.

From a young age, President Biden has been an ardent supporter of Israel. As a child, his father emphasized the vitality and legitimacy of securing a Jewish state in

the aftermath of the Holocaust. Throughout his extensive political career, the president has been deeply engaged in the Israeli-Arab conflict. As Vice President, he was pivotal in navigating the challenging relationship between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Barack Obama. Biden's 36-year tenure in the Senate included being the top recipient of donations from pro-Israeli groups, totaling \$4.2 million, all of which has cemented his significant role in Israel's political landscape.

Now, as the leader of the U.S. and consequently of the Western world, President Biden holds unprecedented significance for Israel. The robustness of his foreign policy towards Israel profoundly influences how other Western allies shape their own policies towards the Jewish state.

On October 9, the United States, in a joint statement with some of its closest allies (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy), stressed their support for Israel and condemnation of Hamas's attack on October 7:

"Today, we...express our steadfast and united support to the State of Israel, and our unequivocal condemnation of Hamas and its appalling acts of terrorism...Our countries will support Israel in its efforts to defend itself and its people against such atrocities. We further emphasize that this is not a moment for any party hostile to Israel to exploit these attacks to seek advantage" (The White House Briefing Room).

Since then, a common consensus on the Israel-Hamas war has been lost among Western nations. As Israel's foremost ally, the United States' waning support and inconsistent messaging regarding Israel have emboldened other Western allies to deviate from their traditional strong support of the Jewish nation, leading them to increasingly criticize Israel more harshly.

On one end of the spectrum, countries such as Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands have consistently maintained a more supportive stance towards Israel. In contrast, others like Spain, Norway, and Ireland have issued statements that have tarnished Israel's international image. However, irrespective of their position on this spectrum, all of these countries have gradually become more critical of Israel as the conflict has evolved, coinciding with a period where Biden's policies and statements have grown more ambiguous.

On December 12, President Biden criticized Israel for what he described as indiscriminate bombing in Gaza, a term typically associated with Hamas and Hezbollah's rocket attacks on Israel. His statement implied a parallel between Israel's military operations and those of its terrorist adversaries. In a White House press conference on February 8, he remarked, "I'm of the view, as you know, that the conduct of the response in Gaza, in the Gaza Strip, has been over the top." Later, on May 8, during an interview with CNN, Biden commented, "I made it clear that if they enter Rafah—they haven't gone in Rafah yet—if they go into Rafah, I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah, to deal with the cities—that deal with that problem." Despite this statement, a week later, Biden approved another \$1 billion arms sale to Israel, coinciding with renewed airstrikes on southern Gaza, highlighting inconsistency in his approach. On May 31, Biden declared, "It's time for this conflict to end," despite no permanent ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. His ongoing expressions of frustration with Netanyahu have also undermined perceptions of his support for the Jewish state during its conflict with Hamas.

Israel's second most supportive ally, Germany, which considers Israel's existence part of its "reason of state," has also begun to show cracks in its support of the only Jewish nation. Germany's historical support of Israel stems not only from post-Holocaust guilt but also from its close ties with the United States. Germany views the United States as its most important international ally and seeks to appease it. Germany follows the U.S.'s lead on many foreign policy matters, and the two have traditionally aligned on issues involving Israel. Thus, as the United States has weakened its stance on Israel, so has Germany. In a meeting between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chancellor Olaf Scholz on March 17, 2024, Scholz admitted, "The more desperate the situation of the people in Gaza becomes, the more this begs the question: No matter how important the goal can it justify such terribly high costs, or are there other ways to achieve your goal?"

On the other extreme, countries such as Spain, Norway, and Ireland—less influential in shaping European policies compared to Germany—have seized upon the U.S.'s diminishing support for Israel as an opportune moment to propound an alternative narrative. In this climate of reduced U.S. assertiveness, these nations feel less constrained by American retaliatory measures in defining their own foreign policies. On May 28, the three nations formally recognized a Palestinian state, a move that other EU members and the United States did not support.

Soon to join these countries may be France, whose snap election results saw a sweeping victory of the leftist coalition, the New Popular Front (NFP), over France's right-wing party, the National Rally. Unlike President Macron and RN leader Marine Le Pen, the NFP has pledged to "immediately recognize" a Palestinian state and demand a ceasefire in Gaza. Such bold statements emerging from within France, one of the U.S.'s long-time democratic allies, highlights a growing trend among European nations to assert their own narratives, independent of U.S. foreign policy.

If President Biden continues to maintain an inconsistent stance on U.S. foreign policy towards Israel, and if his successor adopts a similar approach, it could embolden other Western nations to further distance themselves from the Jewish state, potentially withdrawing financial, political, and military support. As the world's leading power, the U.S. holds the influence to advocate for policies that unequivocally back Israel's efforts to neutralize Hamas and encourage Western allies to stand firmly alongside Israel. However, Biden's current dovish approach in this conflict has contributed to a muddled U.S. position, which allies perceive as weakening the longstanding U.S.-Israel relationship and providing an opening for their divergence from historical support for the Jewish state.

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