

How Obama Lost Israel's Election



When Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu came to town in early March, he came to address a joint session of Congress at the invitation of House Speaker John Boehner. President Barack Obama pointedly refused to meet with him. His excuse was that he didn't want to appear to influence the Israeli elections, just two weeks away.

That excuse was both ironic and blatantly hypocritical, because even as he explained why he would not be meeting with a visiting leader of a US ally, an entire American contingent of Obama activists were on the ground in Israel, working diligently to hijack the elections from Netanyahu. Utilizing many of the techniques that had been used so successfully in Obama's own campaigns, some 169 progressive activists flooded targeted audiences (known lefties and Israeli Arabs), transplanting their American experience and injecting American-style robot-calls, social media, and advertising into the Israeli campaign fervor.

The exercise was partly funded by a \$999,715 three-year State Department grant (i.e. US tax dollars) to the Abraham Fund, a US organization that claims to work actively to create a "shared vision for Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens". The money was effectively laundered through two other organizations, One Voice, a joint US-UK non-profit, and the Israeli organization it sponsored, V-15 (the 'V' stands for 'Victory'), a get-out-the-vote group aimed particularly at young Arab voters. Both groups shared a mission to defeat Netanyahu's Likud party in the March 17 election and replace it with a center-left coalition, more favorable to the Obama administration. Headed by Jeremy Bird, Obama's National Field

Director in two successful presidential campaigns, V-15 was organized to defeat Netanyahu in a campaign they called ABB – Anybody But Bibi.

But the strategists from the US misunderstood Israel and the Israeli people with respect to two fundamental issues.

The first is that Israel, for all of its technological achievements and its staggering contribution of hi-tech tools that have vastly improved 21st century life for the entire world, is still deeply embedded in Middle Eastern culture. Israelis, even as they devour American movies, popular music, fashion, and food, cannot be counted upon to respond to our Western politics as Americans do. The culture of the Middle East is an intrinsic part of the Israeli psyche. Anyone who does not understand that, and thinks that ‘‘if it works in the US it will work in Israel’’, is likely to be deeply disappointed.

The second thing that Obama’s team in Israel misunderstood was the fierce independence that characterizes most Israelis, including many Israeli Arabs, and their unwillingness to brook interference from outside when it comes to the core issues of their lives. Once the news was leaked that Obama’s team was trying to influence the elections, the election dynamics in Israel changed dramatically. Given the recent history of presidential slights to their prime minister, Obama is roundly distrusted by most Israelis. His perceived interference in their elections turned distrust into anger.

The exit polls on March 17, which indicated a strong swing to the left and a weak showing by Bibi, were deeply flawed. They did not account for the vast undercurrent of anger on the part of right-leaning and centrist Israelis who refused to answer pollsters querying voters as they left the polls.

To those who understand the subtleties of these cultural issues, the outcome was predictable. Many Israelis who would

otherwise have voted for other 'lists' in Israel's multi-party electoral system (in whichj voters select party lists rather than individual candidates), rallied around Likud, Netanyahu's party, in defiance of the American effort to swing the election results to the left. The outcome was a no brainer.

Obama is notorious for not learning from history, not even very recent history. He prefers to charge ahead with policies and tactics that have failed in the past. Among them is the complete lack of understanding of those we would deal with overseas and his constant meddling in the politics of the countries in the Middle East.

US foreign policy has long been anchored to the false premise that all people around the world would prefer the American way of life if only they understood it and had the opportunity to live it. Nothing could be further from the truth, but as a result, our foreign policy is fundamentally flawed.

A wise president would understand this and construct a new approach to the Middle East diplomacy that would build on past successes. But Obama refuses to learn from history and continues to repeat failed policies that have thrust the world deeper into chaos. Instead of embracing America's shared values with Israel and working together with Netanyahu to fight our common threats, he races to placate our enemies, interferes in the internal affairs of friendly nations, and finds endless fault with Israel's duly and democratically elected government.

In countries where the US has interfered, in Egypt, Lybia, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, to mention jut a few, the outcome has been the same – temporary or ongoing chaos, failing governments, and rapidly metastasizing terrorism in formerly stable countries. Obama continues to promote the same failed policies, bringing down relatively benevolent dictators, who are replaced by rabid Islamist terrorists, warring with each other, destroying the internal infrastructure, and brutalizing

and decimating the local population. Only Egypt, because of its strong military leadership, was able to withstand and defeat this process. Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Yemen have all fallen to the hordes of radicals who now sow chaos and terrorize the local populations. Whether Obama pursues these policies out of naiveté, ignorance, or by design, the outcome continues to repeat itself.

Israel is the only stable and truly democratic country in the region. Long a stalwart ally of the United States, Israel has provided both technology and intelligence to America's own military, sharing a set of values generally unknown or misunderstood in the rest of the Middle East. That is not to say that the US has not tried to meddle into Israel's internal affairs – witness the unending (although pitifully unsuccessful) attempts to impose a peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians, but Israel has not been subject to destructive process now playing out in neighboring countries – until now.

Israel in general and Netanyahu in particular have now become the latest target of Obama's policy of US interference. The US openly flaunts long-held US policy and tradition, and negotiates with Iranian terrorists, even as they continue to publicly call for the destruction of Israel *and the US*. Meanwhile, Obama pronounces veiled threats at Israel, warning that the US may no longer support our tiny ally at the UN Security Council, where Israel has been targeted unmercifully and disproportionately for years. Without the US protective veto to counter the anti-Israel assault, Israel's position in the international community will deteriorate even more than has until now.

It is no secret that Obama was disappointed when Bibi was re-elected, despite (and arguably because of) the interference of Obama's own partisans. But the President's subsequent petulant and puerile response has empowered the growing plague of Islamist terrorists, who view both negotiators and appeasers

as weak and unworthy of respect.

But unlike the other countries that have suffered bitter collapse under the onslaught of US interference, Israel will not collapse. Israel's democracy is strong and far more stable than any of the countries that have fallen into chaos. Despite Obama's best (or worst) efforts, Israel will stand up to the pressure of America's continued interference, and is prepared to fight hard, and against all odds, for its survival.

One thing, however, is clear. US foreign policy and the open disdain of Barack Obama for Israel and its leadership has made both Israel and the US more vulnerable to the rampant metastasis of terrorism throughout the world.

It is time for Congress to reign in this rogue president and re-establish our long-standing policies of supporting our allies and deterring our enemies. While Congress cannot dictate our foreign policy, they can ensure that our laws are not being disregarded by an Executive branch run amuck. Our Constitution requires it and the alternative may be too disastrous to contemplate.

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