

Myth on Foreign Policy: More friendliness and diplomacy are the answers for lasting peace, not confronting our foes.

By Dick Berkowitz

President Obama began his first year in office convinced (and indeed he campaigned on the theme) that President Bush portrayed a sense of belligerence that was conducive to enraging our alleged foes. Obama's counter to that was a world tour that tried to reset our relationships.

He also apologized for using waterboarding on a few al-Qaeda captives, and promised we would never use that form of "torture" again. He also vowed to close Guantanamo Naval base because it too was a symbol of our belligerence by housing prisoners taken from the battlefield against terrorists. He also banned the word "terrorism" from official communiqués in the state department, and wanted to try noted WTC planners in criminal court in Manhattan – site of the World Trade Center attacks on our sovereignty. He also seemed open to the Palestinian view on peace in the Middle East, versus the view of our long time ally Israel

His receipt of the Nobel Peace prize early in his term appeared to be an endorsement by the liberal European establishment that his new direction was the right one: Engage and meet with Iran; don't threaten them, but try all forms of diplomacy different from the Bush Doctrine's "You are either with us or you are against us."

After all Bush "got us into two wars that weren't paid for": Afghanistan and Iraq. According to Obama, Afghanistan was the more important because that was where bin Laden was. Obama's view was: "Bush's belligerence created more enemies who wanted to attack us." Of course, George Bush wasn't around on the first terrorist attempt to topple the World Trade Center in February 1993, or to destroy an American symbol of war – the *U.S.S. Cole* in Yemen in October 2000.

This Obama resetting of relations courted the Russians by reneging on missile defenses for Western Europe allies in Poland and the Czech Republic. The Russians would surely respond with future concessions in trying to convince Iran not to produce a nuclear weapons capability.

Obama also expedited our exit from Iraq (after the surge had worked to pacify the lingering insurgents war) in favor of escalating the war in Afghanistan – the so-called "Good War". However, he did not accept the full recommendations of the military leaders in the field on force needs, but he simultaneously announced their withdrawal with a future date certain. Obama's inexperience showed again as he believed this act would surely assuage the anti-war wing of his party, who didn't want any troops on foreign soil in the first place.

Results of the Obama Doctrine

Now almost four years has transpired under Obama's more compassionate and empathetic policy, we can perhaps judge the results of the change.

Iraq is now less of a friend than we thought and a bit too cozy with neighboring Iran. Perhaps they fear the U.S. will totally withdraw from the Middle East, and who wants to be on the enemy's list of the next nuclear power –Iran?

Afghanistan is scheduled for a complete withdrawal of American troops, but its economy is much more fragile than Iraq's, with much less oil resources, and a history of intense tribal feuding.

Pakistan is furious with the U.S. for invading its sovereign airspace without permission to kill bin Laden. It also claims much collateral damage from the almost exclusive use of drones to take out (kill) al-Qaeda targets. The use of drones as an execution tool also limits the ability to interrogate the targeted before hand to learn of future terrorist attack plans. It is widely accepted that aggressive techniques were successful in not only preventing major follow-up attacks on U.S. soil, but also led us to the site of bin Laden's secret lair in Pakistan for the past six years. Perhaps the Pakistanis are embarrassed he was holed up so close to their national military academy without detection.

Egypt is now denying it is an ally of America (even though it was one) and formerly helped to keep relative peace in that area contiguous to Israel. Under Obama the U.S. abandoned Hosni Mubarak as the Arab Spring was unfolding. Initially Egyptians behaved as if they wanted true democracy to reign in place of the Mubarak dictatorship. The ultimate winners were the Muslim Brotherhood, who have a long history of supporting fundamental Islam and a desire to rid the Middle East of Israel (and Christians as well).

Syria's Assad continues to murder his own people by the thousands in a desperate attempt to hang onto power. Meanwhile, we fail to apply the same pressure and support we did in Libya to prevent its internal bloodshed. One Obama administration response is that the Syrian rebels are infiltrated by al-Qaeda and the takeover group may be worse than Assad. (Maybe we didn't quite decimate al Qaeda by the drone program after all.)

Meanwhile the feckless UN just stands by and watches as it has for most of the population massacres over the past twenty years (in Croatia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Chechnya, the Sudan). Even Bill Clinton took unilateral U.S. action to prevent another massacre in Kosovo.

Libya was a victory for the U.S. of sorts, as we led from behind – supplying planes, weaponry and money to the ostensible carriers of military support, France and the UK. As evidence of the still fragile instability, we were unable to prevent the absolute ignominy of the September 11, humiliation and killing of a sitting U.S. Ambassador (an act of war under most circumstances because our embassies are considered part of U.S. territory and therefore, sovereign).

The obvious planning of that atrocity was terrorist-based, with an al-Qaeda affiliate, but the U.S. representatives went to great extremes to label it a spontaneous uprising due to a several month old film allegedly produced in the U.S. which put the religion of Islam in a bad light. Most observers consider the Administration's motives as an attempt were to divert attention from the fact that al Qaeda was not quite dead, since only two weeks earlier, there was much celebration at the Democratic convention of Obama's signature foreign policy success – the capture and killing of Osama bin Laden.

The entire Middle East is now viewed as erupting in flames, with American flag burning as well as Obama's effigy burning. These "bumps in the road" as articulated by President Obama may signify the Arab Street hasn't yet shown us love and respect from our new, less belligerent face.

Iran Needs More Than a "Reset" of Our Relations

Israel's Prime Minister has a different view of Iran from President Obama. Netanyahu's message to the UN General Assembly set forth a clear course of action to prevent further disasters of colossal proportions due to Iran's achieving nuclear warhead capability.

Sanctions have proven insufficient. They are more painful to Iran's population than to its fanatical leaders.

Threats of mutual assured destruction – which worked in the cold war with the Soviet Union – seemingly have no effect on the religious obsessive Iran leadership, who are elated at the prospect of removing Israel by a nuclear attack. Even if there is a nuclear retaliation, Iran could survive it as a nation, but Israel could not. So future Iranian fundamentalists would be the winner, as current ones would earn martyr status.

A further risk of a nuclear Iran is that they would not hesitate to give bombs to Islamist radicals who would use them against other symbols of western modernism – Europe and the U.S. Bombing countries to a level of a century ago is not a problem to radical Islamists in keeping with their desire to rule the world through the establishment of a new Caliphate.

Therefore the only workable strategy, according to Netanyahu, is: Draw a clear red line beyond which Iran dare not cross.

Iran must dismantle its uranium enrichment program before it reaches a Stage Two 90% capability of making an atomic bomb. It has already finished Stage One – 70% capability. Its enrichment facilities for doing the development are in clear sight of the world. Its statement that it is for peacetime energy purposes is uniformly scoffed at by the West. This drawing of the line must be made by a credible source believed to have the capability and willpower to inflict catastrophic harm to Iran nuclear program.

The reason the enrichment program is so crucial as the source of the red line is that it is the only piece that is observable. The rest may be underground – more centrifuges under a mountain in Qom and detonators almost anywhere.

With such credible drawing of the red line, Netanyahu believes Iran will comply. They already backed down from such redlines due to a prior threat to close the Gulf of Hormuz, through which 35% of the world's oil supply flows.

Could Israel be the bearer of this credible demand? Absolutely.

Could President Obama present such a credible deterrent? You decide.

Could another president of the U.S. make the cogent case for Iran to back down? You decide.

When does this red line need to be made? According to Netanyahu, nothing is absolute on intelligence reports, but making it much more than six months from now may be too late.

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