

Barack H. Obama's Legacy, Part 11

Edward D. Duvall
10 Sep 2017

It is no secret that Mr. Obama detests Israel and their Prime Minister Mr. Netanyahu. Mr. Obama even went so far as to try to influence the Israeli election, seeking to oust Mr. Netanyahu (yet he complains about alleged Russian interference in America's election). Mr. Obama did however, find himself obligated by previous commitments to Israel made by his predecessors, and during his term, much as he wishes it were not so, the U. S. continued to supply Israel with arms and intelligence about the activities of Hamas and Hezbollah.

In my opinion, it is not possible for any Western force, military, economic, political, or otherwise, to arbitrate or resolve the problems of the Middle East. Those issues date back to before the establishment of Israel (1948), before the British Mandate (1922) that created the political Middle East as we know it; prior to the conquest by the Ottoman Turks (1517); prior to the conquest by the Mongols (1258); prior to the "Crusades" (intermittently from 1096 to 1291); prior to the conquest of Arab lands by the Seljuk Turks (1055); and some of them prior to the establishment of Islam by Mohammed (622). The Arab tribes fought the invaders; sometimes they joined the invaders, and when not dealing with them, they fought among themselves. It is no more realistic for a Western power to resolve the hatreds and dissensions of the peoples of the Middle East than for a Buddhist monk to have mediated peace between the medieval Scottish clans. The Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Afghans, Pakistanis, and Persians, comprising various tribes and Islamic sects, will have to fight it out for themselves. The less we are involved, the better for everyone. Either Islam goes back to what it was originally (as revived by al Qaeda and ISIS), or it is a private set of rituals and practices independent from civil society. It is up to the established political and military forces in the region to resolve this on their own.

It seems to me then, that Mr. Bush's policy, following President Wilson's moronic mandate to make everywhere "safe for democracy", was destined for failure. The people of the Middle East do not want democracy, nor do they want freedom (other than to kill their enemies, real or imagined); nor are they ready for it. Mr. Obama, despite his protests to the contrary, continued Mr. Bush's policy in many regards.

Mr. Obama's policy of withdrawing from Afghanistan and Iraq was the correct policy: but he failed to anticipate the civil wars that would naturally result. Then he went back on the policy, getting involved once more by sending U. S. forces there and initiating numerous drone strikes against ISIS. Mr. Obama was correct to ignore the uprising in Iran in 2009; he was correct in ignoring the rebels in Syria. He was wrong to announce a red line against the use of chemical weapons by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and then doing nothing when Assad crossed it. He was wrong when he allowed the nitwit Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to instigate the revolt against Libyan President Ghaddafi and his ultimate removal. The correct policy for the U. S. in the Middle East is to protect Israel as much as practical, and let the rest of them fight it out. If that battle spills over onto U. S. territories, then, and only then, should the U. S. get involved, and in doing so, make the entire region a free-fire zone. As Westerners, we are finding it difficult to treat Oriental peoples in terms they understand: brute force, tyranny, and death. Mr. Obama's policies failed because he wanted it both ways: to withdraw, but at the same time prevent the Arabs from doing what comes to them naturally.

Mr. Obama's tilt toward Iran and the "nuclear deal" appears to have been done purely as a political claim of "having done something"; nothing was gained by it.