

Trump made mistake; Biden ducked responsibility

By Ebrahim Behnam
Guest contributor

The US secretary of state once again brought up the recurring stance of the Joe Biden administration on America's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran on the sidelines of the Davos summit in Switzerland. Anthony Blinken called the move that took place under former president Donald Trump in 2018 "deeply unfortunate".

Blinken said that "it was a big mistake to tear up the Iran nuclear agreement," because it had kept Iran's nuclear program "in the box".

"Since the agreement was torn up, it's escaped from that box," he added.

The acknowledgement of the wrongness of Trump's decision to withdraw from the JCPOA dates back to 4 years ago and during the 2020 US presidential election campaigns. Biden went even a step further in his statement and, upon entering the White House, announced that one of his administration's key foreign policy initiatives would be the revival of the JCPOA and Washington's return to the nuclear agreement.

Now Biden's secretary of state says that the US is "now at a place where we didn't want to be because we don't have the agreement."

Such a stance reveals a sort of evasion and attempt to dodge responsibility on the part of the US government. Mr. Blinken and other US statesmen and decision-makers have failed to ask themselves why they find themselves in such an undesirable position.

Who is accountable for creating such a situation? Why did multiple rounds of negotiations to bring back to life the nuclear deal not yield results? Undoubtedly, Trump's decision was wrong, but what has the Biden administration done to make up for its predecessor's mistake? Have they charted a new course aimed at resolving the issue, or have they brought the talks to a standstill by introducing non-

JCPOA matters into the nuclear talks and pressing for their own excessive demands? What is evident is that the Biden administration has not taken any constructive measures to return to the JCPOA and allow Iran to reap the benefits of the nuclear deal. Furthermore, they have imposed new sanctions on Tehran. The US government, alongside the European trioka - France, Britain and Germany - has yet to even lift the arms embargo against Iran as stipulated in the JCPOA.

Hence, raising Trump's ill-advised move to withdraw from the nuclear deal ahead of the US presidential election, while taking into account election campaigns and a new potential confrontation between Trump and Biden, only serves as a gesture to win more votes and not a genuine step toward breaking the gridlock in the nuclear saga. The admission of mistake will prove useful only when it is followed by the US government's accountability and clear determination to resuscitate the nuclear agreement. It goes without saying that until such resolve is realized, the unfortunate situation as asserted by the US secretary of state, will persist and perhaps even worsen.

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Israel escalates Gaza strikes after medicine-for-aid deal



Israel stepped up strikes Wednesday on Gaza's south, where medicines were expected to be delivered for

hostages in exchange for humanitarian aid under a newly brokered deal. Air strikes and artillery

fire targeted Khan Yunis throughout the night. "It was the most difficult and intense night in Khan

Yunis since the start of the war," said Gaza's Hamas government, whose health ministry reported 81 deaths across the Palestinian territory, AFP reported. Fighting has ravaged Gaza since Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attacks on Israel that resulted in the death of about 1,140 people. At least 24,448 Palestinians, about 70 percent of them women, young children and adolescents, have been killed in Israeli bombardments and ground assaults, according to the Gaza health ministry's latest figures. Hamas and other resistance groups seized about 250 captives during the October 7 attacks, and around 132 remain in Gaza, includ-

ing at least 27 believed to have been killed. The fate of those still in captivity has gripped Israeli society, while a broader humanitarian crisis in Gaza marked by the threat of famine and disease has fueled international calls for a cease-fire. The agreement announced by Qatar on Tuesday following French and Qatari mediation will allow medicines to reach the hostages and aid to enter the besieged Palestinian territory. The International Committee of the Red Cross welcomed the deal, under which 45 hostages are expected to receive medication, as "a much-needed moment of relief". At the Abu Yusef Al-Najjar

hospital in Rafah, Palestinians stood in front of bodies wrapped in shrouds, mourning the loss of loved ones killed in an overnight Israeli strike. "Why are they doing this? They are destroying us," Umm Muhammad Abu Odeh, a woman displaced from the north Gaza town of Beit Hanun, told AFP. The Israelis "told us to go south, and we came here... but there is no safe place in Gaza". The United Nations says the war has displaced roughly 85 percent of Gaza's 2.4 million people, many of whom have been forced to crowd into shelters and struggle to get food, water, fuel and medical care.

Arab nations reject Iranophobia project

Dialogue key to solving regional crises



By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

The results of a survey conducted by the Qatar-based Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies among 8,000 people in 16 Arab countries indicate a heightened anti-American sentiment in the Arab world after the Gaza war. According to the survey, 94% of respondents evaluated the US position in the Gaza war negatively, and 98% opposed the official recognition of Israel. To discuss the results of this survey, Iran Daily interviewed Diako Hosseini, a researcher on strategic issues in Tehran.

According to the survey, the majority of people in 16 Arab countries perceive the United States and Israel as the biggest threats to the security and stability of the West Asia region. 51% of respondents consider the US the biggest threat, while 26% see Israel in that light. What factors do you think have contributed to these anti-American sentiments in the Arab world?

Public opinions are largely influenced by recent significant events related to a country, region, or the world. For instance, in 2003, when the US invaded Iraq and toppled Saddam Hussein's regime, there was a brief positive evaluation of the US actions in the Arab world. However, as the attacks intensified and insecurity escalated, opinions turned against the US. In 2011, during the Arab Spring protests, public sentiment in the Arab world initially supported US positions, but as tensions and US interventions persisted, sentiments turned against the US. Especially regarding the Israel-Palestine issue, the US has lost credibility as a neutral mediator. Despite America's efforts to improve its im-

age through soft power, this survey indicates its failure. Today's Arab society, largely educated with a strong middle class, naturally compares US policies with those of other major powers like China, which tends to intervene less in Arab countries' internal affairs. Therefore, the intensification of anti-American sentiments doesn't seem unnatural. Recent Israeli atrocities, committed with US support, have undoubtedly played a significant role in this situation.

While the US has tried to repair anti-American sentiments through soft power, its Iranophobia policy aims to portray Tehran as the main threat to regional security. However, the survey shows that only 7% perceive Iran as the primary threat, while 51% consider the US the main threat in 2024, up from 39% in 2022. What does this tell you?

This suggests the failure of the Iranophobia policy, which used the alleged Iranian nuclear threat as a pretext and intensified after 2003. Despite heavy investments, Arab nations' historical and cultural ties with Iran pre-

vented the success of this policy. The Iranophobia policy peaked during the Syrian war when Tehran was supporting Bashar al-Assad's government. But even then, the majority of the Arab world considered the US to be the main threat to the region's security. Iran's rational positions during the Gaza war and support for the Palestinian people have increased its popularity in the Arab world, making it difficult for the US to convince the Arab world to view Tehran as a regional threat.

It seemed that before the Gaza war, Israel, with US support, had amassed some capital to strengthen its position in the Arab and Islamic world. For example, it had successfully advanced its project of normalizing relations with several Arab countries to the extent that there was talk of normalizing talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia right before October 7, 2023. However, according to the survey, 89% of people in Arab countries oppose recognizing Israel. Has Israel, along with the



Pro-Palestinian protesters burn the flags of Israel and the United States in Karachi, Pakistan, on October 8, 2023, after Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel.

US, lost whatever capital it had acquired?

Yes, it appears so. It is noteworthy that if there were some achievements, they were made between Israel and Arab states, not Arab nations. Since the establishment of the Israeli regime, the majority of Arab nations have had a negative attitude towards it. The Palestinian issue holds both an Islamic and an Arab dimension for the Arab world, and the failure of Arab armies in wars against Israel was seen as a blow to Arab identity. However, Arab nationalism is still dear to Arab nations, which makes things difficult for Israel and the US. In this survey, 92% of respondents stated that the Palestinian issue concerns the entire Arab world.

Benjamin Netanyahu claimed in the early days of the war that it would bring fundamental changes to regional security. However, the survey reveals that, at least in terms of public opinion in the Arab world and globally, these changes have not benefited Israel. Only 5% of the Arab com-

munity considered Hamas' October 7 attack illegitimate.

Nothing else was expected from the beginning. What happened on October 7 with Hamas's Operation Al-Aqsa Storm was a predictable counter-attack against Israel by Hamas. The Gaza Strip had been under complete Israeli siege for years. What Hamas did was within the framework of legitimate defense, responding to Israel's numerous injustices against the Palestinians. Like the majority of the Arab world, most consider the October 7 attack a just defense. The victimized image that Israel initially created for itself gradually disappeared with mass killings and genocide in Gaza. Strategically, Israel has little chance of achieving its stated goal of destroying Hamas, as long as discrimination and injustice persist. These groups will continue to exist under any name and ideology, as long as discrimination, injustice, and crimes persist.

You said that the US has lost its credibility as a neutral, sincere mediator. Considering the now-substantiated anti-American

sentiments of the people of the region, is there the possibility of other major powers stepping in to solve the Israel-Palestine issue?

It's hard to predict that. The waning US influence does not necessarily mean that other major powers will increase their presence in the region or in the case of Palestine. We are faced with a complicated global situation where no single power has enough influence to solve the Palestinian issue. What is more, the positions of Israel and Palestine are worlds apart. So, other powers, like China, neither have the ability to play a significant role, nor the willingness to try. Currently, China lacks the willingness to enter into major political issues that would entail some commitment from Beijing. Therefore, there's no simple solution to various regional crises in Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, and other countries that is developed by major powers. The solution is for the regional countries to engage in dialogue and achieve understanding, just as agreements between Iran and Saudi Arabia ended the destructive, drawn-out war in Yemen.