Obama’s Betrayal of Israel Is a Black Day for American Diplomacy

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Adding a final shameful chapter to a foreign-policy record that already runneth over with them, Barack Obama on Friday abandoned America’s commitment to Israel’s security, and to the vindication of democracy over sharia-supremacist aggression. In an act of cowardly venom, the president had the United States abstain from — and thereby effectively enact — a United Nations Security Council resolution that condemns Israeli settlement activity. At least, that’s what the resolution ostensibly does. The reality is much more than that. The resolution undertakes to render our ally indefensible. It was a black day in modern American diplomatic history, a flurry of sinister wheeling and dealing while the nation — exhausted by the election, anticipating a weekend of Christmas and Hanukkah celebration — was looking the other way.

To his great credit, Donald Trump was not. The president-elect asserted himself on Israel’s behalf, backing up his campaign promise that “America First” meant restoration of America’s reputation as a dependable friend and an enemy not to be trifled with. Under the pressure he generated, Egypt backed down, withdrawing its sponsorship of the resolution. But such is the disdain in which Israel is openly held after eight Obama years of empowering Islamists that four other countries — Malaysia, Venezuela, Senegal, and, of all places, New Zealand — revived the resolution, knowing they had the State Department’s backing. With the U.S. abstention, it was easily approved.

It is a disgraceful legacy of Barack Obama that his obsession over settlements and antipathy toward Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu — traits he shares with his old radical comrade, Rashid Khalidi — have made the already dim prospects for peace far more remote. At the root of the settlements controversy is the fiction that the territory at issue is “occupied Palestinian” land. In point of stubborn fact, no matter how tirelessly the vaunted “international community” evokes the scurrilous image of occupation, the territory is righteously disputed. It is Islamist-leftist dogma that Israel’s millennia of attachment to its homeland count for nothing, and that the Jewish state owes its existence to a fit of remorse over Nazi barbarism — one of the reasons Holocaust denial is an Islamist pastime.

Still, even under this skewed version of history, the occupation crowd has no case. Israel’s foes claim that the settlements are illegitimate because Israel’s only lawful boundaries are the 1948 armistice lines. This is the so-called Green Line that was in effect right before Arab nations (including their Palestinian component, mainly in Jordan) commenced the invasion that began the 1967 Six-Day War. I italicize “armistice lines” to highlight that the demarcations, even back in 1967, were not national boundaries. They were disputed even before the Arab war of aggression. The armistice lines merely reflect the position of Israeli and Arab forces when the cease-fire went into effect. They were not accepted as final boundaries by the affected countries. As we shall see, they could not be accepted as final boundaries by Israel.

Nevertheless, Israel did not set out to conquer the disputed territory. The Jewish state took it fair and square when they won the defensive war against enemies that sought Israel’s destruction. Thus the unending pattern that the United States and Western European powers cravenly refuse to address: Islamic factions and nations are free to reserve the right to eradicate Israel, but Israel must pretend the aggression never happened and the continuing threat does not exist. Regardless of how many resolutions the rabidly anti-Semitic U.N. rolls out, territorial sovereignty, like other disputed issues, will not be settled unless the parties directly affected by it, Israel and the Palestinians, arrive at an understanding. Obama, however, has schemed to impose an outcome unilaterally by rendering as illegitimate Israel’s side of the argument — which, to the contrary, is as justifiable legally as it is essential for Israel’s security. That, alas, is Obama’s real legacy: There are no good-faith disputes with him; you either agree with him or you are an outlaw.

The resolution adopted on Friday does so much more than merely condemn “settlement activities.” It says such activities must cease in “occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.” For good measure, it adds that the construction of settlements on territory that Palestinians covet — and that Israel righteously controls — has “no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law.” By giving the Palestinians everything and then some, the resolution removes any Palestinian incentive to negotiate for lasting peace. See? The true purpose of the resolution is not to stop settlement construction. It is to dictate a final disposition. It puts the imprimatur of the Security Council — which, for transnational progressives, is our ultimate global ruler — on a decree that says: The disputed territory is actually Palestinian territory, and that this Palestinian territory includes East Jerusalem (i.e., the most sacred portion of the city Israel regards as its eternal capital — again, for millennia of valid historic reasons).

For good measure, this patently political decree masquerades as objective legal analysis, pronouncing that its thumb on the scale is somehow dictated by international law. Outrageous as this legal razzle-dazzle is, it is secondary to the resolution’s assault on Israeli security. First, by giving the Palestinians everything and then some, the resolution removes any Palestinian incentive to negotiate for lasting peace. Indeed, by requiring no Palestinian concessions, it tells the Islamists and leftists who run Palestinian affairs that their jihadist campaign will continue to be rewarded and that the Security Council accepts — and effectively abets — their objective of eradicating the Jewish state (whether by terrorism, “democracy” activism, or both).

Second, it would make that eradication more probable. The 1948 armistice lines cannot be viable national borders for Israel because, as Obama, the Security Council, and Israel’s hostile neighbors well know, they are not defensible. Put aside that Israel is no larger than New Jersey and surrounded by existential threats. In the area just north of Tel Aviv, the center of the country is just nine miles wide (running east to west from the Green Line to the Mediterranean coastal town of Netanya).

As IDF Major General Yaakov Amidror explained in a 2005 study on the security requirements for lasting peace, the 1967 boundaries do not provide “defensive depth,” a longstanding principle of military doctrine holding that there must be an area sufficient for a defensive force to redeploy after being attacked, and for reserves to enter or counterattack — the territorial space between the battlefront and the strategic interior that any army must have in order to function. The boundaries the Security Council seeks to impose would be inadequate even if Palestinian leadership — including the Muslim Brotherhood’s terrorist branch, Hamas — were not committed to Israel’s destruction. Obama knows all of this. He also knows that the campaign to destroy Israel is politically waged with U.N. resolutions every bit as much as Hamas wages it with rockets. It is therefore essential that our nation, as a reliable ally, uses our veto power to protect Israel’s security.

That is why Obama would not have dared abstain from the vote on such a resolution before Election Day. The only glimmer of hope on this dark day is President-elect Trump’s willingness to use what limited leverage he had in Israel’s defense. Perhaps more important was his vow, after the resolution was adopted, that things will be different come January 20 “as to the U.N.” It seems the incoming president has identified the real problem.