

# Americans weren't interested in prolonging Obama's policies through Harris

written by David M. Weinberg | 17.11.2024

More than last week's US presidential vote being a victory for Donald Trump, it was a searing defeat for Barack Obama. This month's real headline is "Trump thrashes Obama again."

In a torrent of impassioned campaign stops over the past two months, former president Obama made it clear that this election was a referendum on his policies.

He explicitly warned that unless Kamala Harris was elected president, everything that he stood for and worked for would be washed down the drain. He literally said that the "fate of the nation" hung in the balance.

He said the same thing in 2016 when he strenuously campaigned for Hillary Clinton.

Back then, Obama told voters, "If you supported me in '08, if you supported me in '12, if you think that I've done a good job, if you believe that Michelle has done a good job - everything that we've done over the last eight years will be reversed with a Trump presidency. And everything will be sustained and built on with a Hillary Clinton presidency."

Well, there never was a Hillary Clinton presidency, and there will not be a Kamala Harris presidency either. And it is not just because both were flawed candidates. (In Harris's case, this is the understatement of the century.)

It is because more than half of Americans rejected the notion that Obama had "done a good job," and they were not interested in "sustaining" his policies.

They didn't want another four or eight years of stand-ins for Obama on top of his own eight years in the White House and his four surrogate years via President Biden.

## **No longer able to buy the Democratic message**

They did not buy the Democratic message that everything was swell in America and that all that was needed was a competent Democrat to advance Obama's superior approach. They didn't buy the assertion that Obama was America's leading tutelary figure.

If you're not familiar with how iconic and messianic Obama is still considered by the progressive "elites" of America and how dominant he still is in Democratic backrooms, see David Samuels' July essay in UnHerd, titled "The true President of America's Fifth Republic: Obama, not Biden is the nation's new Lincoln." Just who did you people think was running things for the past four years? "It's me," writes Samuels in Obama's voice.

Americans who elected Trump as president in 2016 and again this year were uncomfortable with Obama's smug assurances of omnipotent everything: That he possessed exceptional insight on every issue, and that he had executed the most-outstanding economic, social, and foreign policy. And that Hillary and Kamala were the repository of this unique wellspring of near-prophetic and superhuman wisdom.

Moreover, it seems that many Americans were turned off by the Democratic-progressive obsession with race, identity politics, quotas, ideological and personal purity tests, and other hallmarks of what is called "wokeism."

These markers became part of American culture under Obama, ramped up under Biden, and would have roared forward to dictatorially uber-dominate American social and political discourse under Harris.

Championed by the liberal legacy media and radicalized high academia, this discourse was meant to gut the traditional moorings of Judeo-Christian values in American society and to upend long-standing American principles in foreign policy. And so, American voters took down Obama/Biden/Harris, resoundingly.

ON FOREIGN POLICY, think back to Barack Obama's last UN speech in December 2016. In his swan song, Obama seemed baffled by the stubborn refusal of the world to reform itself in his image and on his say so. How can there still be "deep fault lines in the international order," Obama wondered aloud, with "societies filled with uncertainty, and unease, and strife?"

Hadn't his very identity as a man "made up of the flesh and blood and traditions and cultures and faiths from a lot of different parts of the world" served as a shining and irresistible example of blended global peace? How could it be that, after eight years of his visionary leadership, people everywhere were not marching to the tune of Obama's self-declared superior "moral imagination"?

## **Unwillingness to project power**

The answer to these painful questions, to which Obama could never admit - nor can Biden - is their unwillingness to project power and confront adversaries.

Both Democratic presidents rejected the traditional and time-tested hard power tools of statecraft. They abjured the use of military force and other forms of raw American power. They knew how to "speak out forcefully" - say, against Iran or the Houthis - but that's it.

They were simply ashamed of America's "overbearing" record of decisive global leadership and left America shorn of its ability to shape the world in right directions.

Indeed, they were filled with "contempt" for the notion of America as a moral actor on the world stage (see Ben Rhodes, Obama's doppelganger, in a 2016 New York Times Magazine interview with the same David Samuels). The words "enemy," "threat," and "adversary" were not part of their political lexicons. Nor were concepts like "victory" for the West or "beating" the bad guys.

Alas, throughout Israel's wars of the past year against Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, the Biden-Harris administration has fetishized de-escalation - apart from Biden's immediate emotional, appropriately defiant response to the initial Hamas assault on Israel.

In the main, US diplomats have spent the past year begging and panting for "immediate ceasefires," expressing alarm at the possibility of any "escalation," and distancing themselves from "involvement" in any Israeli military initiative except pure defensive operations (like blocking incoming Iranian missiles).

And they have feigned dismay at the isolation of Israel while paving the way towards that isolation with demonizing sanctions against settlers and with false

accusations about Israel's "starvation" of Palestinians in war zones.

And so, Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis (as well as Russia, China, Turkey, and other bad actors) have never taken the Democrats seriously, of course. They have ignored the Biden-Harris-Blinken-Sullivan squad's exhortations to de-escalate, just as Iran laughed all the way to the bank when Obama signed the JCPOA nuclear accord and released tens of billions of dollars to Iran.

Biden continued the bankrolling of Iran via sanctions relief and the release of seized oil revenues. Iran almost certainly would have obtained nuclear weapons sometime during a Harris presidency with little pushback from Washington.

America's enemies - yes, enemies! - have not feared the US for years, except when Trump applied "maximum" economic pressure on Iran and bumped off IRGC leader Qassem Soleimani.

THE BEST prescription now for an American reset leading to global stability (and improved Israeli security) is a determination by the Trump administration to neutralize the Iranian nuclear juggernaut, counter Iran's hegemonic march across the region, and thwart Iran's proxies.

What is needed is a strategic reset based on overwhelming American power and the presentation of a credible US military threat against Iran - at least.

This includes arming Israel with bunker-buster bombs, not on weak-kneed US protestations of non-involvement in Israel's wars, desperate exhortations towards de-escalation, nor toothless, soft understandings between Washington and Tehran.

If there is a path to peace and stability in the Middle East, it requires enhancing the firepower of America and its allies, not redoubling the pursuit of "de-escalation."

Few Americans had this specific perspective on Mideast affairs in mind when they elected Trump over Obama/Biden/Harris last week.

But surely, they felt the vibe - that American wokeness and moral self-doubt were insidious weaknesses. And therefore, they ruled that the Obama era finally must end.

Published in The Jerusalem Post, November 17, 2024.