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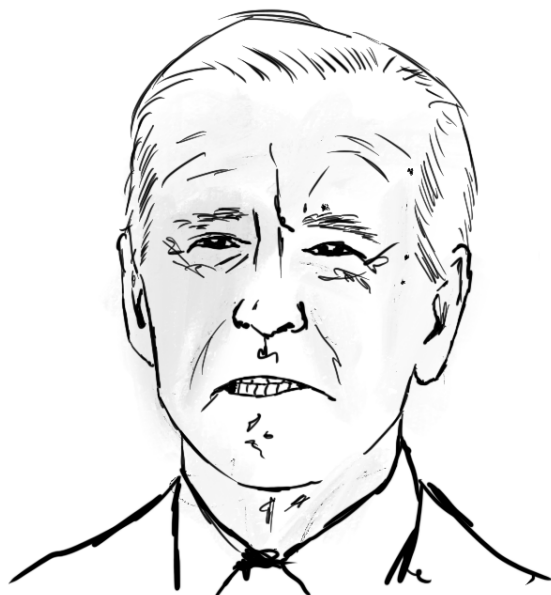
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زبانهای اروپایی

BY MARIAMNE EVERETT

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## Biden: A War Cabinet?



Drawing by Nathaniel St. Clair

“Let’s bring decency and integrity back to the White House.” I can’t count the number of times I have heard and read this phrase uttered by U.S. expats here in Paris, France. As one of many American expats living here, of course I share in the desire for an end to a Donald Trump presidency. But at what cost? And will a Biden presidency — which promises a return to “normalcy” — really merit the sigh of relief that so many think it will? Below I summarise some of the most troubling information I have uncovered about some of the most likely foreign policy picks for key positions in a Biden cabinet.

**Susan Rice for Secretary of State**

Susan Rice, who was also reportedly being considered for the role of Biden's Vice President, served as United States Ambassador to the United Nations and as National Security Advisor, both under the Obama administration.

While Benghazi has been the focus of much criticism of Rice, she has received virtually no scrutiny for her backing of the invasion of Iraq and claiming that there were WMDs there. Some of her statements:

"I think he [then Secretary of State Colin Powell] has proved that Iraq has these weapons and is hiding them, and I don't think many informed people doubted that." (NPR, Feb. 6, 2003)

"It's clear that Iraq poses a major threat. It's clear that its weapons of mass destruction need to be dealt with forcefully, and that's the path we're on. I think the question becomes whether we can keep the diplomatic balls in the air and not drop any, even as we move forward, as we must, on the military side." (NPR, Dec. 20, 2002)

"I think the United States government has been clear since the first Bush administration about the threat that Iraq and Saddam Hussein poses. The United States policy has been regime change for many, many years, going well back into the Clinton administration. So it's a question of timing and tactics. ... We do not necessarily need a further Council resolution before we can enforce this and previous resolutions." (NPR, Nov. 11, 2002; requests for audio of Rice's statements on NPR were declined by the publicly funded network.)

She has also been criticised extensively for her record on the African continent, which judging by [the following quote](#) at the beginning of the 1994 Rwandan genocide seems to have been to adopt a "laissez faire" attitude : "If we use the word 'genocide' and are seen as doing nothing, what will be the effect on the November [congressional] election?"

Susan Rice's past rhetoric also includes choice [generous words for African dictators](#). One great example is former prime minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, a man who [ordered security services to open fire on protestors](#) during its controversial 2005 election, has a track record of [imprisoning journalists](#), used food aid as a [political tool](#) and stole [land](#) in south Ethiopia. In her speech at his funeral, Susan Rice described him as ["brilliant"](#) and a ["close friend"](#).

Although Rice has often [been portrayed as someone who is anti-Israel](#), her mild criticisms pale in comparison to her staunch record and discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

In a [speech](#) given at the AIPAC Synagogue Initiative Lunch back in 2012, Rice boasted about vetoing a UN resolution that would deem Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land as illegal, and further characterized the Goldstone Report as "flawed" and "insisted on Israel's right to defend itself and maintained that Israel's democratic institutions could credibly investigate any possible abuses." Her position has changed little since then, as recently as 2016, [she proclaimed](#) that "Israel's security isn't a Democratic interest or a Republican interest—it's an enduring American interest."

**Tony Blinken for National Security Adviser**

Tony Blinken is also an old member of the Obama administration, having served first as VP Biden's National Security Advisor from 2009 to 2013, Deputy National Security Advisor from 2013 to 2015 and then as United States Deputy Secretary of State from 2015 to 2017.

Blinken had immense influence over Biden in his role as Deputy National Security Advisor, helping formulate Biden's approach and support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"For Biden...", he argued, "and for a number of others who voted for the resolution, it was a vote for tough diplomacy." He added "It is more likely that diplomacy will succeed, if the other side knows military action is possible."

The two of them were responsible for delivering on Obama's campaign promise to get American troops out of Iraq, a process so oversimplified and poorly handled that it led to even more chaos than the initial occupation and insurgency.

Blinken seems to be of the view that it is upto the US, and only the US, to take charge of world affairs : "On leadership, whether we like it or not, the world just doesn't organize itself. And until this [Trump] administration, the U.S. had played a lead role in doing a lot of that organizing, helping to write the rules, to shape the norms and animate the institutions that govern relations among nations. When we're not engaged, when we don't lead, then one or two things is likely to happen. Either some other country tries to take our place – but probably not in a way that advances our interests or values – or no one does. And then you get chaos or a vacuum filled by bad things before it's filled by good things. Either way, that's bad for us."

Blinken also appears to be steering Biden's pro-Israel agenda, recently stating that Biden "would not tie military assistance to Israel to any political decisions that it makes, period, full stop." which includes an all out rejection of BDS, the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions Movement against Israel's occupation of Palestine.

### **Michèle Flournoy for Secretary of Defence**

Michele Flournoy was Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2009 to 2012 in the Obama administration under Secretaries Robert Gates and Leon Panetta.

Flournoy, in writing the Quadrennial Defense Review during her time as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy under President Clinton, has paved the way for the U.S.'s endless and costly wars which prevent us from investing in life saving and necessary programmes like Medicare for All and the Green New Deal. It has effectively granted the US permission to no longer be bound by the UN Charter's prohibition against the threat or use of military force. It declared that, "when the interests at stake are vital, ...we should do whatever it takes to defend them, including, when necessary, the unilateral use of military power."

While working at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a "Top Defense and National Security Think Tank" based in Washington D.C., in June 2002, as the Bush administration was threatening aggression towards Iraq, she declared, that the United States would "need to strike preemptively before a crisis erupts to destroy an adversary's weapons

stockpile” before it “could erect defenses to protect those weapons, or simply disperse them.” She continued along this path even in 2009, after the Bush administration, in [a speech](#) for the CSIS : “The second key challenge I want to highlight is the proliferation – continued proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as these also pose increasing threats to our security. We have to respond to states such as Iran, North Korea, who are seeking to develop nuclear weapons technologies, and in a globalized world there is also an increased risk that non-state actors will find ways to obtain these materials or weapons.”

It is extremely important to note that Flournoy and Blinken co-founded the strategic consulting firm, WestExec Advisors, where the two use their large database of governmental, military, venture capitalists and corporate leader contacts to help companies win big Pentagon contracts. One such client being Jigsaw, a technology incubator created by Google that [describes itself](#) on its website as “a unit within Google that forecasts and confronts emerging threats, creating future-defining research and technology to keep our world safer.” Their partnership on the AI initiative entitled Project Maven led to a [rebellion by Google workers](#) who opposed their technology being used by military and police operations.

Furthermore, Flournoy and Blinken, in their jobs at WestExec Advisors, co-chaired the biannual meeting of the liberal organization Foreign Policy for America. Over 50 representatives of national-security groups were in attendance. Most of the attendees [supported](#) “ask(ing) Congress to halt U.S. military involvement in the (Yemen) conflict.” Flournoy did not. She said that the weapons should be sold under certain conditions and that Saudi Arabia needed these advanced patriot missiles to defend itself.

### **Conclusion**

If a return to “normalcy” means having the same old politicians that are responsible for endless wars, that work for the corporate elite, that lack the courage to implement real structural change required for major issues such as healthcare and the environment, then a call for “normalcy” is nothing more than a call to return to the same deprived conditions that led to our current crisis. Such a return with amplified conditions and circumstances, could set the stage for the return of an administration with dangers that could possibly even exceed those posed by the current one in terms of launching new wars.

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*Mariamne Everett is an intern at the Institute for Public Accuracy currently living in France.*