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BY RAMZY BAROUD

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Cognitive Dissonance: Perplexed US Foreign Policy is Prolonging Gaza Genocide



Image by mohammed al bardawil.

When the foreign policy of a country as large and significant as the United States is governed by a case of cognitive dissonance, terrible things happen.

These terrible things are, in fact, already taking place in the Gaza Strip, where well over 100,000 people have been killed, wounded or are missing, and an outright famine is currently ravaging the displaced population.

From the start of the war on October 7, the US mishandled the situation, although recent reports indicate that Biden, despite his old age, has read the overall meaning of the October 7 events correctly.

According to the Axios news website, Biden had argued in a meeting with special counsel, Robert Hur, on October 8 that the ‘Israel thing’ – Hamas attack and the Israeli war on Gaza – “has changed it all”.

By ‘change it all’, he was referring to the fact that the outcome of these events combined will “determine what the next six, seven decades look like”.

Biden is not wrong. Indeed, everything that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government and war council have done in Gaza point to a similar Israeli reading of the significance of the ‘world-altering’ events.

Netanyahu has proven his willingness to carry out genocide and starve millions of Palestinians because he still feels that the superior firepower of the Israeli army is able to turn back the clock, and restore Israel’s military standing, geopolitical influence and global position.

He is wrong, and over five months of war and senseless killing continue to demonstrate this claim.

But the American political gamble in the Middle East and the global repercussions of Washington’s self-defeating foreign policy makes far less sense.

Considering Washington’s historic support for Israel, the US’ behavior in the early days of the war was hardly a surprise.

The US quickly mobilized behind Netanyahu’s war cabinet, sent aircraft carriers to the eastern Mediterranean, indicating the US is ready for a major regional conflict.

Media reports began speaking of US military involvement, specifically through the Delta Force, although the Pentagon claimed that the 2,000 US soldiers were not deployed to fight in Gaza itself.

If it was not obvious that the US was a direct partner in the war, US mainstream media reports ended any doubt. On March 6, The Washington Post reported that “the United States has quietly approved and delivered more than 100 separate foreign military sales to Israel since the Gaza war began”.

With time, however, US foreign policy regarding Gaza became even more perplexing.

Though in the early weeks of the war-turned-genocide, Biden questioned the death toll estimates produced by the Gaza Ministry of Health, the casualties count was no longer in doubt later on.

Asked on February 29 about the number of women and children killed by Israel during the war, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin answered without hesitation: “It’s over 25,000”.

Yet, the numbers are in constant growth, as well as US shipments of weapons to Israel. “We continue to support Israel with their self-defense needs. That’s not going to change,” John Kirby, US National Security Advisor, told ABC News on March 14.

This particular statement is worth a pause, since it came after many media leaks regarding Biden’s frustration, in fact, outright anger in the way that Netanyahu is handling the war.

ABC News reported early February that Biden has been “venting his frustration” over his administration’s “inability to persuade Israel to change its military tactics in Gaza”. Netanyahu, the outlet quoted Biden as saying, is “giving him hell”.

This is consistent with other recent reports, including one by Politico, claiming that Biden has privately “called the Israeli prime minister a ‘bad f*cking guy’”, also over his Gaza war stance.

Yet, Netanyahu remains emboldened to the extent that he appeared in a Fox News interview on March 11, openly speaking about ‘disagreements’, not only between Biden and Netanyahu’s governments, but between the US President “and the entire Israeli people.”

It is glaringly obvious that, without continued US military and other forms of support, Israel would have not been able to sustain its war on the Palestinians for more than a few weeks, thus sparing the lives of thousands of people.

Moreover, the US has served as Israel’s vanguard against the vast majority of world governments who, daily, demand immediate and unconditional ceasefire in the Strip. If it were not for repeated US vetoes at the UN Security Council, a resolution demanding a ceasefire would have been surely passed.

Despite this unconditional support, the US is struggling to stave off a wider regional conflict, which is already threatening its political standing in the Middle East.

Therefore, Biden wants to regain the initiative by renewing discussions – though without commitment to real action – about a two-state solution and the future of Gaza.

Netanyahu is disinterested in these matters since his single greatest political achievement, from the viewpoint of his rightwing constituency, is that he has completely frozen any discussions on a political horizon in Palestine. For Netanyahu, losing the war means the unceremonious return to the old American political framework of the so-called “peace process”.

The embattled Israeli Prime Minister also knows that ending the war would constitute an end to his own government coalition, mostly sustained by far-right extremists like Itamar Ben-

Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich. To achieve these self-serving goals, the Israeli leader is willing to sustain a clearly losing war.

Though Biden has completely “lost faith in Netanyahu”, according to the Associated Press, he continues to support Israel without openly questioning the disastrous outcomes of the war, not just on the Palestinian people, but also on the region and the world, including his own country.

Americans, especially those in Biden’s Democratic Party, must continue to increase their pressure on their administration so that it resolves its cognitive dissonance in Palestine. Biden must not be allowed to play this deadly balancing act, privately demanding for the war to stop, while openly funding the Israeli war machine.

Though the majority of Americans already feel that way, Biden and his government are yet to receive the message. How many more Palestinians would have to die for Biden to hear the chants of the people, ‘Ceasefire now’?

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist and the Editor of The Palestine Chronicle. He is the author of five books. His latest is “These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons” (Clarity Press, Atlanta). Dr. Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA), Istanbul Zaim University (IZU). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net

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