

Pompeo's Prose is Iran's worse nightmare

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US SECRETARY of State Mike Pompeo speaks on Thursday to students at the American University in Cairo. (photo credit: ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS/REUTERS)

Supporters of President Barack Obama attack President Donald Trump for reversing his predecessor's policies. To be sure, many of Trump's actions are debatable. But his approach to Iran and radical Islam are historic and vital correctives to the disastrous strategies pursued by Obama. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in particular, did a masterful job in his Cairo speech of making the president's case with the moral clarity his predecessor lacked.

It was fitting that Pompeo gave his address in the same city where Obama made his first major foreign policy speech and set the tone for his ill-advised and failed approach to the region. It was in Cairo that Obama made clear he did not see radical Islam as a threat, which was later reflected in his decision to support the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood's ascension to power in Egypt and capitulate to Iran's hegemonic designs by signing an unverifiable nuclear deal that rewarded the mullahs with more than \$100 billion.

In both instances, Obama was guilty of, at best, naiveté. In the case of Egypt, he believed the election of radical Islamists made them kosher. Worse, he believed appeasement of the mullahs in Iran would lead them to change their theocratically based antagonism toward the West and genocidal intent toward Israel.

Pompeo rightly criticized Obama (though he did not use his name) for "fundamental misunderstandings" about the region that "underestimated the tenacity and viciousness of radical Islamism." He justifiably upbraided the former president for blaming our country "for what ails the Middle East."

“When we neglect our friends, resentment builds,” Pompeo told his audience. “When we partner with enemies, they advance.”

This is exactly what happened under Obama. When he failed to enforce the “redline” in Syria after Bashar Assad gassed Arab children, he sent a message of weakness that our enemies exploited. He allowed Russia to come to Assad’s aid, almost comically invited Putin to oversee Assad’s destruction of his chemical weapons, and allowed the Russian dictator to become more entrenched than ever in Syria. Obama’s deal with Russia to enforce the removal of Syrian chemical weapons will forever haunt his legacy just as the pictures of innocent Arabs dying of Mustard and Sarin gas in Aleppo will haunt Western memory. Obama pulled our troops out of Iraq, giving Iran greater influence over that country and eliminating a major deterrent to Iranian expansionism while also reassuring the mullahs he would not use military force to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. He sided with radical Islamists against our allies in the Gulf and Israel, damaging America’s credibility.

It was refreshing to hear Pompeo speak bluntly: “Countries increasingly understand that we must confront the ayatollahs, not coddle them.”

Since Obama signed the nuclear deal, we have learned the Iranians hid their research on nuclear weapons for future use, the agency responsible for verifying the agreement refuses to inspect military sites where Iran is most likely to engage in weapons development, Iran has continued to seek materials to build a bomb, and Iran is testing ballistic missiles designed to carry nuclear warheads in violation of UN resolutions.

RATHER THAN change its anti-Western orientation as Obama predicted, Iran has become more belligerent. The situation has gotten so bad that even our European allies, who sided with Obama to advance their economic interests in Iran, just announced new sanctions because they discovered Iran was plotting terror attacks in their countries.

Yes, Chancellor Merkel, Prime Minister May, and President Macron, there is gambling in Rick’s casino.

Listening to Obama officials attack Pompeo and defend the former president has a Twilight Zone quality. Robert Malley, one of the architects of Obama’s disastrous policies said, “Listening to Secretary Pompeo’s speech is like listening to someone

from a parallel universe.” Malley is right in the sense that the universe he and his colleagues live in was one where radical Islam did not exist and Iran was benevolent. To see how divorced from reality the Obamas are, another former official said, “Pompeo sees his audience as the region’s autocrats rather than its people.”

Excuse me, but don’t they recall that Obama gave his speech in Cairo while Hosni Mubarak was in power? They also forget that Muslims didn’t take Obama’s speech seriously because giving the speech in Egypt, where the regime repressed Muslims, sent the message that Obama was willing to support dictators so long as they were pro-American.

I was opposed to President Trump’s initial announcement to pull troops out of Syria and was grateful that the president and his lieutenants - including Pompeo and John Bolton - appear to have slowed down the withdrawal. But let’s not forget Obama was unwilling to use any kind of force to protect Muslim civilians from massacres in Syria.

Worse, as Pompeo noted, when Iranians protested their cruel leaders during the Green Revolution, Obama refused to support their calls for democracy and an end to the repressive theocracy. Instead, Obama legitimized their brutal rule.

“The ayatollahs and their henchmen murdered, jailed, and intimidated freedom-loving Iranians, and they wrongly blamed America for this unrest when it was their own tyranny that had fueled it,” Pompeo said. “Emboldened, the regime spread its cancerous influence to Yemen, to Iraq, to Syria, and still further into Lebanon.”

Speaking specifically of Lebanon, Pompeo added, “Our penchant, America’s penchant, for wishful thinking led us to look the other way as Hezbollah, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Iranian regime, accumulated a massive arsenal of approximately 130,000 rockets and missiles. They stored and positioned these weapons in Lebanese towns and villages in flagrant violation of international law. That arsenal is aimed squarely at our ally Israel.” While Obama ignored these developments, Pompeo pledged, “the United States will work to reduce the threat of Hezbollah’s missile arsenal.”

Also, we should not forget that Pompeo’s predecessor devoted his final foreign policy address to attacking Israel. John Kerry preferred the theocrats in Tehran

and the terrorists in Ramallah to the democrats in Jerusalem. Kerry and his boss were angered by the unreasonableness of the Israelis to stand by silently while their security was compromised by the Obama administration's calamitous policies.

As I've written many times, there may be no greater global threat than the genocidal regime in Iran. That is why Pompeo's remarks were so important. "America's economic sanctions against the regime are the strongest in history," he said, "and will keep getting tougher until Iran starts behaving like a normal country." He subsequently announced plans for a summit in Poland to discuss how to ensure that "Iran is not a destabilizing influence."

My friend Dan Shapiro, Obama's ambassador to Israel and a fine and decent man, tweeted of Pompeo's speech, "Prediction: no one in the Middle East will remember anything about Pompeo's speech by next week." Well, to the extent Obama's speech was memorable it was for all the flaws outlined by Pompeo.

And in any event, it not important for Pompeo's remarks but the actions that the administration takes that must be remembered. It was Lincoln who said at Gettysburg that "the world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here." He was of course wrong. His speech has gone down as perhaps the most famous in American history. Yet his point is well taken. Words can never replace action, which is why Lincoln continued with the words, "But it can never forget what they did here."

History will record that Trump's withdrawal from the embarrassing nuclear agreement with Iran re-enforced American values by refusing to reward a genocidal, terrorist regime. Pompeo's speech was a moral declaration America will no longer apologize for its opposition to radical Islam and will dedicate itself to combating Iran's malevolent influence and nuclear ambitions.

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, "America's Rabbi," whom The Washington Post calls "the most famous Rabbi in America," is the international bestselling author of 30 books, including his most recent, The Israel Warrior.

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