

Why Turning Our Back on Israel Now Would Be a Disaster

America and Israel have long enjoyed one of the world's closest friendships. But at no time has that friendship been stronger than under Donald Trump's leadership. As Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu put it, Israel has "never had a better friend in the White House than your president, Donald J. Trump."

But this beautiful friendship between America and Israel may not flourish any longer under Joe Biden's presidency. By every indication, Biden seems likely to repeat old Obama-era mistakes and undermine the tremendous progress made by Donald Trump. Already *The New York Times* has hailed Biden's election as a "demotion" for Netanyahu and a signal that the U.S. will shift focus from Israel.

Turning our back on Israel now would be a disaster. After all of Trump's successes, we don't need policy reversals or sudden changes. Instead, we simply need to remain consistent, constant and faithful in stewarding our friendship with Israel while building up peace and stability in the Middle East. Trump made Israel a priority for American foreign policy; Biden should follow suit, or else he will risk hurting once more America's great friendship with Israel.

Much is at stake in whether Biden stays the course that Trump has charted or reverts to failed Obama-era foreign policy priorities. That's in large part because Trump's open embrace of America's special relationship with Israel has led to some of the most historic victories in the fight for peace in Middle East.

Amidst tense regional conflict and animosity, President Trump

pursued an ambitious peace plan for the Middle East. Time and again, President Trump brokered peace deals between Israel and its neighbors, ensuring that Israel's place in the Middle East would be secure. Under Trump's leadership, Arab states traditionally hostile to the Jewish people have become willing to normalize their diplomatic relationships with Israel—a key first step in creating a political environment that is safer for Israel and more peaceful for everyone in the region.

What's more, Trump was able to accomplish so much for peace in the Middle East without requiring Israel to make illegitimate diplomatic concessions. Trump even made the historic gesture of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's true capital, a move that many falsely feared would hurt the chances for peace in the Middle East. Trump proved his critics wrong. When Trump was in office, the people of Israel knew that America would do everything in its power to defend Israel's right to exist freely, peaceably and prosperously in the Middle East.

An about-face by Biden would threaten all of this. Nowhere does this threat loom larger than in the situation with Iran. Biden has said that he wants to re-enter the Iran nuclear deal—a horrible arrangement that Trump was right to withdraw from. But not only would re-entering the Iran nuclear deal destabilize the careful peace deals Trump has brokered; the deal is strongly opposed by Israel, and any support we show for it is a slap in the face to our closest ally in the region.

Re-entering the Iran nuclear deal represents precisely the kind of counter-intuitive, disrespectful and harmful diplomatic move that the Obama administration was famous for doing. That Biden has already signaled his interest in making such a move himself does not bode well for America's friendship with Israel.

Biden has big shoes to fill when it comes to Israel. Trump raised the bar on what it means for a president to care for

America's greatest ally. Biden should want to live up to Trump's example in the region. If he doesn't, his decisions could have lasting negative impact on the stability of the Middle East. {eo}

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