

MIDDLE EAST WAR

Assault on Israel is Biden's foreign policy failure

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US President Joe Biden's visit to Israel has been judged by most observers as a strong and unequivocal gesture of solidarity with the Jewish State - together with the deployment of fleet units in front of the eastern Mediterranean coastline - in the very delicate moment that the latter is going through after the terrible massacre perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October within its borders, and in the days of the difficult reprisal against

the fundamentalists in the Gaza Strip. It has also been interpreted by many as an attempt to avoid an escalation of violence in the region, trying to moderate the Israeli reaction and leave open margins for dialogue and negotiation with the Arab world.

But it should in fact rightly be read first and foremost as an attempt to at least partially remedy a chain of negative events for US and Western interests triggered precisely by the failed foreign policy strategy pursued by the Biden administration itself.

The latter, in fact, since 2021 has systematically demolished, with disastrous results, some fundamental lines of the international policy promoted by Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump. First of all, it undermined the patient negotiations that Trump had conducted with the 'Abraham Accords' (signed in 2020 between Israel, the Arab Emirates, and Bahrain) to bring the Jewish State closer to the most influential countries of Sunni Islam, and especially Saudi Arabia, and thus favour an overall stabilisation of the area, isolating disruptive and extremist agents such as Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas itself.

Ever since his election campaign, and then once in office, Biden has instead held an openly hostile attitude to the regime of Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, justifying it with the killing of the Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, for which Salman was suspected of being responsible. And, conversely, he initiated a policy of dialogue with the regime of the Iranian ayatollahs, seeking to restart Tehran's nuclear negotiation process, which Trump had halted in 2018 by revoking the treaty that had been negotiated in 2015 by the Obama administration.

A reversal that strengthened the Iranians, giving them greater margins of manoeuvre on the Middle East chessboard (used by them to strengthen their ties with China and Russia), and decisively weakening Israel. And which culminated in the release of 6 billion dollars of Iranian funds frozen in the United States, just a few days before the massacre perpetrated by Hamas in the Israeli kibbutzim, probably encouraged if not financed by Tehran itself: with a resounding boomerang effect on American credibility.

In the meantime, the Biden administration had actively worked against its own and the entire West's vital interests on the Ukrainian front as well, increasingly fuelling tension with Russia, refusing to seek a mutually agreed negotiated solution to the rift that had opened in 2014 and, after the Russian invasion in February 2022, supporting Kiev one-sidedly, treating Putin as an enemy and totally isolating him from the West: with the result of tightening relations between Moscow and Beijing, playing into the hands of China - its main global antagonist - on the geopolitical level and coagulating a

composite anti-Western front that has also attracted previously allied or friendly countries.

With regard specifically to the Middle Eastern balances, the head-on clash with Putin has greatly embarrassed Israel, which has consolidated economic and political relations with Moscow and has an interest in a joint management with the Russians of the crisis areas between Syria and Lebanon. It has brought Saudi Arabia closer to Russia, with a coordinated oil price policy, and even to Iran, its antagonist *par excellence*. It has re-legitimised the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, Moscow's 'fiefdom' in the Middle East, readmitted to the Arab League precisely with the Saudis' blessing. And, above all, it interrupted the path towards the completion of the Abraham Accords, with the hoped-for normalisation of diplomatic relations between Israelis and Saudis.

In short, a domino effect of almost unprecedented self-defeating disasters (completed by the growing destabilisation of sub-Saharan Africa, triggered by China and Russia), which created the ideal terrain for those with an interest in reigniting the Arab-Israeli conflict. And which materialised unequivocally last August when, at the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, it was announced that Saudi Arabia and Iran, together with the Emirates and Egypt, would join the organisation from 2024.

Having belatedly realised the very dangerous slippery slope it had triggered, the Biden administration began to try to remedy it at least in part with a change in its line towards Riyadh, which began with Biden's visit in the summer of 2022 and culminated last August with the involvement of Saudi Arabia, at the G20 in New Delhi, in the memorandum of understanding for the India-Middle East-Europe infrastructure corridor called the 'Cotton Road', to symbolically contrast it with China's hegemonic 'New Silk Road' project.

But by then it was too late, and Pandora's box had been opened. The potential axis between Israel and the Sunni Arab countries desired by Trump, which, once consolidated, could perhaps have counted on benevolent Russian neutrality, was already at a dead end. But Hamas's attack and the inevitable Israeli reaction, again polarising anti-Jewish hatred in Islamic societies, now condemns it to indefinite postponement, if not final obliteration. To the delight of fundamentalists, hardliners, and anti-Western regimes the world over. And with the consequence of pushing Europe and the West back to the front line, not only on the Russian-Ukrainian front, but also on that of the Middle Eastern conflicts and of a more than probable, indeed already begun, resurgence of Islamist terrorism, favoured by the time bomb of the conspicuous communities of 'radicalised' Islamic immigrants now established within their walls.