

The Four Horsemen of Gaza's Apocalypse. Chris Hedges

Joe Biden relies on advisors who view the world through the prism of the West's civilizing mission to the "lesser breeds" of the earth to formulate his policies towards Israel and the Middle East.

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Joe Biden's inner circle of strategists for the Middle East — Antony Blinken, Jake Sullivan and Brett McGurk — have little understanding of the Muslim world and a deep animus towards Islamic resistance movements. They see Europe, the United States and Israel as involved in a clash of civilizations between the enlightened West and a barbaric Middle East. They believe that violence can bend Palestinians and other Arabs to their will. They champion the overwhelming firepower of the U.S. and Israeli military as the key to regional stability — an illusion that fuels the flames of regional war and perpetuates the genocide in Gaza.

In short, these four men are grossly incompetent. They join the club of other clueless leaders, such as those who waltzed into the suicidal slaughter of World War One, waded into the quagmire of Vietnam or who orchestrated the series of recent military debacles in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Ukraine. They are endowed with the presumptive power vested in the Executive Branch to bypass Congress, to provide weapons to Israel and carry out military strikes in Yemen and Iraq. This inner circle of true believers dismiss the more nuanced and informed counsels in the State Department and the intelligence communities, who view the refusal of the Biden administration to pressure Israel to halt the ongoing genocide as ill-advised and dangerous.

Biden has always been an ardent [militarist](#) — he was calling for [war](#) with Iraq five years before the U.S. invaded. He built his political career by catering to the distaste of the white middle class for the popular movements, including the anti-war and civil rights movements,

that convulsed the country in the 1960s and 1970s. He is a Republican masquerading as a Democrat. He joined Southern segregationists to oppose bringing Black students into Whites-only schools. He [opposed](#) federal funding for abortions and supported a constitutional amendment allowing states to restrict abortions. He [attacked](#) President George H. W. Bush in 1989 for being too soft in the “war on drugs.” He was one of the [architects](#) of the [1994 crime bill](#) and a [raft of other](#) draconian laws that more than doubled the U.S. prison population, militarized the police and pushed through drug laws that saw people incarcerated for life without parole. He supported the North American Free Trade Agreement, the greatest [betrayal](#) of the [working class](#) since the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act. He has always been a strident [defender](#) of Israel, [bragging](#) that he did more fundraisers for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) than any other Senator.

“As many of you heard me say before, were there no Israel, America would have to invent one. We’d have to invent one because... you protect our interests like we protect yours,” Biden [said](#) in 2015, to an audience that included the Israeli ambassador, at the 67th Annual Israeli Independence Day Celebration in Washington D.C. During the same speech he said, “The truth of the matter is we need you. The world needs you. Imagine what it would say about humanity and the future of the 21st century if Israel were not sustained, vibrant and free.”

The year before Biden gave a [gushing eulogy](#) for **Ariel Sharon**, the former Israeli prime minister and general who was [implicated](#) in [massacres](#) of Palestinians, Lebanese and others in Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon — as well as Egyptian prisoners of war — going back to the 1950s. He described Sharon as “part of one of the most remarkable founding generations in the history not of this nation, but of any nation.”

While repudiating Donald Trump and his administration, Biden has not reversed Trump’s [abrogation](#) of the Iran [nuclear deal](#) negotiated by Barack Obama, or Trump’s [sanctions](#) against Iran. He has embraced Trump’s close ties with Saudi Arabia, including the rehabilitation of **Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman**, following the [assassination](#) of the Saudi journalist **Jamal Khashoggi** in 2017 in the consulate of Saudi Arabia in Istanbul. He has not intervened to curb Israeli attacks on Palestinians and settlement expansion in the West Bank. He did not reverse Trump’s moving of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, although the embassy [includes](#) land Israel illegally colonized after invading the West Bank and Gaza in 1967.

As a seven-term senator of Delaware, Biden [received more](#) financial support from pro-Israel donors than any other senator, since 1990. Biden retains this record despite the fact that his senatorial career ended in 2009, when he became Obama’s vice president. Biden explains his commitment to Israel as “personal” and “political.”

He has [parroted](#) back Israeli propaganda — including fabrications about [beheaded babies](#) and widespread [rape](#) of Israeli women by Hamas fighters — and asked Congress to [provide](#) \$14 billion in additional aid to Israel since the Oct. 7 attack. He has twice [bypassed](#) Congress to supply Israel with thousands of bombs and munitions, including at least [100 2,000-pound bombs](#), used in the scorched earth campaign in Gaza.

Israel has [killed or seriously](#) wounded close to 90,000 Palestinians in Gaza, almost one in every 20 inhabitants. It has destroyed or damaged over [60 percent](#) of the housing. The “safe areas,” to which some 2 million Gazans were instructed to flee in southern Gaza, have been bombed, with thousands of casualties. Palestinians in Gaza now make up [80 percent](#) of

all the people facing famine or catastrophic hunger worldwide, according to the U.N. Every person in Gaza is hungry. A quarter of the population are starving and struggling to find food and drinkable water. Famine is imminent. The 335,000 children under the age of five are at [high risk](#) of malnutrition. Some 50,000 pregnant women [lack](#) healthcare and adequate nutrition.

And it could all end if the U.S. chose to intervene.

“All of our missiles, the ammunition, the precision-guided bombs, all the airplanes and bombs, it’s all from the U.S.,” retired Israeli **Major General Yitzhak Brick** [told](#) the Jewish News Syndicate. “The minute they turn off the tap, you can’t keep fighting. You have no capability... Everyone understands that we can’t fight this war without the United States. Period.”

Blinken was Biden’s principal foreign policy [adviser](#) when Biden was the ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee. He, along with Biden, lobbied for the invasion of Iraq. When he was Obama’s deputy national security advisor, he advocated the 2011 overthrow of **Muammar Gaddafi** in Libya. He opposed withdrawing U.S. forces from Syria. He [worked](#) on the disastrous [Biden Plan](#) to [partition Iraq](#) along ethnic lines.

“Within the Obama White House, Blinken played an influential role in the imposition of sanctions against Russia over the 2014 invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine, and subsequently led ultimately unsuccessful calls for the U.S. to arm Ukraine,” [according to](#) the Atlantic Council, NATO’s unofficial think tank.

Image: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv, Oct. 12, 2023. – Secretary Antony Blinken on X



When Blinken landed in Israel following the attacks by Hamas and other resistance groups on Oct. 7, he [announced](#) at a press conference with **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu**:

“I come before you not only as the United States Secretary of State, but also as a Jew.”

He attempted, on Israel’s behalf, to lobby Arab leaders to accept the 2.3 million Palestinian refugees Israel intends to ethnically cleanse from Gaza, a request that evoked outrage among [Arab leaders](#).

Sullivan, Biden’s national security advisor, and McGurk, are consummate opportunists, Machiavellian bureaucrats who cater to the reigning centers of power, including the Israel lobby.


Sullivan was the [chief architect](#) of Hillary Clinton's [Asia pivot](#). He backed the [corporate](#) and [investor rights](#) Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, which was sold as [helping](#) the U.S. [contain](#) China. Trump ultimately killed the trade agreement in the face of [mass opposition](#) from the U.S. public. His [focus](#) is thwarting a rising China, including through the [expansion](#) of the U.S. military.

While not focused on the Middle East, Sullivan is a foreign policy hawk who has a knee jerk embrace of force to shape the world to U.S. demands. He [embraces](#) military Keynesianism, [arguing](#) that massive government spending on the weapons industry benefits the domestic economy.

In a 7,000-word essay for Foreign Affairs magazine published five days before the Oct. 7 attacks, which left some 1,200 Israelis dead, Sullivan [exposed](#) his lack of understanding of the dynamics of the Middle East.

Jake Sullivan's 'Quieter' Middle East Comments Did Not Age Well

The national security adviser has drawn criticism for recent public remarks. Biden officials pushed back on the idea that Mr. Sullivan was offering a lasting view on Middle East conflicts.

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Jake Sullivan, President Biden's national security adviser, at the White House earlier this month. Doug Mills/The New York Times

Screenshot from [The New York Times](#)

“Although the Middle East remains beset with perennial challenges,” he [writes](#) in the original version of the essay, “the region is quieter than it has been for decades,” adding that in the face of “serious” frictions, “we have de-escalated crises in Gaza.”

Sullivan ignores Palestinian aspirations and Washington’s rhetorical backing for a two-state solution in the article, hastily rewritten in the online version after the Oct. 7 attacks. He writes in his original piece:

At a meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, last year, the president set forth his policy for the Middle East in an address to the leaders of members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. His approach returns discipline to US policy. It emphasizes deterring aggression, de-escalating conflicts, and integrating the region through joint infrastructure projects and new partnerships, including between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

McGurk, the deputy assistant to President Biden and the coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa at the White House National Security Council, was a chief architect of Bush’s “surge” in Iraq, which accelerated the bloodletting. He [worked](#) as a legal advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority and the U.S. ambassador in Baghdad. He then became Trump’s anti-ISIS czar.

He does not speak Arabic — none of the four men does — and came to Iraq with no knowledge of its history, peoples or culture. Nevertheless, he [helped](#) draft Iraq’s interim constitution and oversaw the legal transition from the Coalition Provisional Authority to an Interim Iraqi Government led by **Prime Minister Ayad Allawi**. McGurk was an early backer of **Nouri al-Maliki**, who was Iraq’s prime minister between 2006 and 2014. Al-Maliki built a Shi’ite-controlled sectarian state that deeply alienated Sunni Arabs and Kurds. In 2005, McGurk transferred to the National Security Council (NSC), where he served as director for Iraq, and later as special assistant to the president and senior director for Iraq and Afghanistan. He served on the NSC staff from 2005 to 2009. In 2015, he was [appointed](#) as Obama’s Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter [ISIL](#). He was retained by Trump until his resignation in Dec. 2018.

An article in April 2021 titled [“Brett McGurk: A Hero of Our Times,”](#) in New Lines Magazine by former BBC foreign correspondent Paul Wood, paints a scathing portrait of McGurk. Wood writes:

A senior Western diplomat who served in Baghdad told me that McGurk had been an absolute disaster for Iraq. “He is a consummate operator in Washington, but I saw no sign that he was interested in Iraqis or Iraq as a place full of real people. It was simply a bureaucratic and political challenge for him.” One critic who was in Baghdad with McGurk called him Machiavelli reincarnated. “It’s intellect plus ambition plus the utter ruthlessness to rise no matter the cost.”

[....]

A U.S. diplomat who was in the embassy when McGurk arrived found his steady advance astonishing. “Brett only meets people who speak English. ... There are like four people in the government who speak English. And somehow he’s now the person who should decide the fate of Iraq? How did this happen?”

Even those who didn't like McGurk had to admit that he had a formidable intellect — and was a hard worker. He was also a gifted writer, no surprise as he had clerked for Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist. His rise mirrored that of an Iraqi politician named Nouri al-Maliki, one careerist helping the other. That is McGurk's tragedy — and Iraq's.

[....]

McGurk's critics say his lack of Arabic meant he missed the vicious, sectarian undertones of what al-Maliki was saying in meetings right from the start. Translators censored or failed to keep up. Like many Americans in Iraq, McGurk was deaf to what was happening around him.

Al-Maliki was the consequence of two mistakes by the U.S. How much McGurk had to do with them remains in dispute. The first mistake was the "80 Percent Solution" for ruling Iraq. The Sunni Arabs were mounting a bloody insurgency, but they were just 20% of the population. The theory was that you could run Iraq with the Kurds and the Shiites. The second error was to identify the Shiites with hardline, religious parties backed by Iran. Al-Maliki, a member of the religious Da'wa Party, was the beneficiary of this.

In a [piece](#) in HuffPost in May 2022 by Akbar Shahid Ahmed, titled "Biden's Top Middle East Advisor 'Torched the House and Showed Up With a Firehose,'" McGurk is described by a colleague, who asked not to be named, as "the most talented bureaucrat they've ever seen, with the worst foreign policy judgment they've ever seen."

McGurk, like others in the Biden administration, is bizarrely focused on what comes after Israel's genocidal campaign, rather than trying to halt it. McGurk [proposed](#) denying humanitarian aid and refusing to implement a pause in the fighting in Gaza until all the Israeli hostages were freed. Biden and his three closest policy advisors have called for the Palestinian Authority — an Israeli puppet regime that is reviled by most Palestinians — to take control of Gaza once Israel finishes leveling it. They have called on Israel — since Oct. 7 — to take steps towards a two-state solution, a plan [rejected](#) in an humiliating public rebuke to the the Biden White House by Netanyahu.

The Biden White House spends more time talking to the Israelis and Saudis, who are being lobbied to normalize relations with Israel and help rebuild Gaza, than the Palestinians, who are at best, an afterthought. It believes the key to ending Palestinian resistance is found in Riyadh, summed up in a top-secret document peddled by McGurk called the "Jerusalem-Jeddah Pact," the HuffPost [reported](#). It is unable or unwilling to curb Israel's bloodlust, which included missile strikes in a residential neighborhood in Damascus, Syria, on Saturday that [killed](#) five military advisors from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and a [drone attack](#) in South Lebanon on Sunday, which killed two senior members of Hezbollah. These Israeli provocations will not go unanswered, evidenced by the ballistic missiles and rockets [launched](#) on Sunday by militants in western Iraq that targeted U.S. personnel stationed at the al-Assad Airbase.

The Alice-in-Wonderland idea that once the slaughter in Gaza ends a diplomatic pact between Israel and Saudi Arabia will be the key to regional stability is stupefying. [Israel's genocide](#), and Washington's complicity, is shredding U.S. credibility and influence, especially in the Global South and the Muslim world. It ensures another generation of enraged Palestinians — whose families have been obliterated and whose homes have been

destroyed — seeking vengeance.

The policies embraced by the Biden administration not only blithely ignore the realities in the Arab world, but the realities of an extremist Israeli state that, with Congress bought and paid for by the Israel lobby, couldn't care less what the Biden White House dreams up. Israel has [no intention](#) of creating a viable Palestinian state. Its [goal](#) is the ethnic cleansing of the 2.3 million Palestinians from Gaza and the annexation of Gaza by Israel. And when Israel is done with Gaza, it will turn on the West Bank, where Israeli raids now occur on an almost nightly basis and where [thousands](#) have been arrested and detained [without charge](#) since Oct. 7.

Those running the show in the Biden White House are chasing after rainbows. The march of folly led by these four blind mice perpetuates the cataclysmic suffering of the Palestinians, stokes a regional war and presages another tragic and self-defeating chapter in the two decades of U.S. military fiascos in the Middle East.

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