

The Price of Hillary

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No [secretary of state](#) will come to that office with stronger pro-Israel credentials or closer ties to the Jewish community than Sen. [Hillary Clinton](#), Douglas Bloomfield [assures his readers](#) in The Jerusalem Post. Good for them, and for Bosnia's Muslims and Kosovo's Albanians; but for the rest of us Mrs. Clinton's appointment as the third woman U.S. Secretary of State is hugely problematic. It heralds "the end of the world as we know it" in some ways, although neither she nor her coterie necessarily know what they are doing.

At the technical level, Hillary Clinton is likely to deepen the chronic crisis of the once-venerable institution at Washington's Foggy Bottom, to which her two female predecessors have contributed in two different ways.

Madeleine Albright was an activist who will be remembered for her hubris ("If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future."), coupled with studied callousness. Asked on "60 Minutes" about the death of a half-million Iraqi children due to sanctions, she promptly responded, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price is worth it." Her crowning glory was her premeditated 1999 war in the Balkans, prior to which she said that "the Serbs need a little bombing." Her State Department contributed to the formulation, as well as execution, of Bill Clinton's doctrine of "humanitarian intervention."

Condoleezza Rice, less evil and more obtuse, will be remembered for nothing. She was an auxiliary tool of the Bush-Cheney team, with all key decisions made elsewhere.

Mrs. Clinton will try to rebuild the relative importance of the Department of State, which will become her personal fiefdom, but her labors will not be for the better. Her appointment, the most significant among several major figures from the Clinton era, belies Obama's rhetoric of "change" when it comes to foreign affairs. There will be tectonic shifts, cultural and moral, at home. The established premises of an imperial presidency - which in world affairs inevitably translates into the quest for dominance and justification for global interventionism - will not be challenged, however.

Once it is accepted that Obama's primary interest lies in an irreversible redistribution of power and money at home, it ceases to be surprising that he chose Hillary Clinton as his chief diplomat. Allowing her to indulge in some global grandstanding is acceptable to him, if that means the Clintons will not stand in the way of his domestic agenda. They are both revolutionaries, after all: that Mrs. Clinton is instinctively opposed to any traditional understanding of diplomacy became obvious during the primary campaign, when she accused Obama of "naivete" for saying he was willing to meet leaders of Iran, Syria and North Korea.

With Robert Gates staying at the Pentagon and Jim Jones as Obama's national security adviser, there will be a lot of continuity in the U.S. foreign policy, not only with the 1990s but also with recent years. In Mrs. Clinton's case there will be more lies, the hallmark of the family. During the primaries she listed a number of foreign policy accomplishments based on her husband's legacy. She claimed that in 1999 she "negotiated open borders" in Macedonia to Albanian refugees from Kosovo, although the crossings were opened days before her arrival. She had repeatedly invoked her "dangerous" trip to Bosnia in 1996, including alleged snipers at Tuzla airport, whereas the Bosnian war had ended six months earlier and video footage shows smiling schoolchildren greeting her in Tuzla. (She later admitted "misspeaking" over sniper claims.)

In the same spirit Mrs. Clinton declared, in late 2002,

"Saddam Hussein has worked to rebuild his chemical and biological weapons stock, his missile-delivery capability and his nuclear program. He has also given aid, comfort and sanctuary to terrorists, including al-Qaida members. I want to insure that Saddam Hussein makes no mistake about our national unity and for our support for the president's efforts to wage America's war against terrorists and weapons of mass destruction."

Hillary Clinton says that she has had second thoughts since that time, and a year ago she declared in *Foreign Affairs* magazine that "US troops should be brought home." During the primary campaign, however, she was markedly less willing than Obama to commit to a withdrawal timetable. The woman who voted to authorize the Iraq war, and who parroted lies used to justify it, cannot be expected to clean up the mess created by that war. It is more likely that she will advocate a downsized, rebranded, and effectively open-ended U.S. occupation of Iraq for which the military has been preparing ever since the "Surge."

In Afghanistan, far from disengaging, Mrs. Clinton will advocate greater troop deployments and an escalation of military activity. On Iran, during the primaries she sounded like John McCain: "I want the Iranians to know that if I'm the president, we will attack Iran" if it attacks Israel, she declared last April: "In the next 10 years, during which they might foolishly consider launching an attack on Israel, we would be able to totally obliterate them." She will negotiate with the mullahs, however, if Tehran's tacit support is considered necessary for the achievement of her major ambition: a breakthrough in the Middle East.

Bill Clinton came closer than any U.S. president to brokering Arab-Israeli peace in the final year of his presidency, and insiders say that Hillary will place this issue at the top of her agenda. She is a favourite of the pro-Israel lobby, however, and it is unclear what she can offer, or do, in 2009-2010 that was not offered or tried at Camp David a decade earlier.

A Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank in return for recognition of Israel's right to exist, security guarantees, and diplomatic recognition, is all fine but distinctly *déjà vu*. She will need to present a fresh formula, but to make it viable she will have to start by rephrasing her stated support for "undivided" Jerusalem. Considering the realities of American politics, she may find it harder to do so than Ehud Olmert, the city's former mayor and - until recently - Israel's prime minister.

The misnamed war on terrorism is the weakest spot in Barack Hussein Obama's global agenda, and Hillary Clinton will do nothing to rectify the problem. Alone among leading

contenders of either party, she has no section devoted to fighting terrorism on her website and had very little to say on it during the campaign. “We know we need global coalitions to tackle global problems like climate change, poverty, AIDS, and terrorism,” she declared, hinting at her priorities.

To confuse natural phenomena, human condition, and a lifestyle-inflicted disease with the most tangible real and present threat to Western civilization would be remarkable in any prominent public figure. In view of Mrs. Clinton’s appointment it is alarming.

That she does not understand the phenomenon of Jihad was evident during her U.S. Senate campaign, in the course of which on at least two occasions she hosted receptions organized by the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), a group that has promoted the activities of Hamas, Turkey’s fundamentalist Welfare Party, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Mrs. Clinton had to return \$50,000 received from MPAC—the Jewish vote in New York was at risk!—but she justified her contacts by claiming that she was trying “to promote a framework for peace,” that included “lines of communication to many different groups and many different individuals.”

Her “framework for peace” in the Balkans is the same as her husband’s: unqualified support for Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo against their Christian neighbors. In her book *Hillary’s Choice*, Gail Sheehy recalls that she pressed Bill to start the Kosovo war in 1999. When he expressed concern that bombing could have undesirable effects, including the prospect of rising civilian casualties, Hillary persisted: “I urged him to bomb. You cannot let this go on at the end of a century that has seen the major holocaust of our time. What do we have NATO for if not to defend our way of life?”

There had never been a “holocaust” in Kosovo, of course, but to this day she sees the U.S.-led NATO aggression against Serbia as a good war. In her Senate speech before the Iraq war vote she pointed approvingly to her husband’s decision and drew parallels to the Bush administration’s rationale for removing Saddam from power.

On the slender plus side, Hillary Clinton appears to be less Russophobic than some of Obama’s advisors, notably Zbigniew and Mark Brzezinski. She has criticized the Bush administration’s “obsessive” focus on “expensive and unproven missile defense technology,” the deployment of which in Poland and the Czech Republic is a key point of contention between Washington and Moscow. She favors further reducing both sides’ nuclear arsenals, and also supports U.S. Senate approval of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. On the key issue of further NATO enlargement, however, both she and Obama will continue the Bush administration’s flawed policy of seeking membership for Ukraine and Georgia.

That Obama’s foreign policy may follow the neoliberal-hawkish Democratic tradition became apparent with the selection of Sen. Joe Biden as his running mate, and soon after the election with the appointment of Rep. Rahm Emanuel as his chief of staff. It is not incidental that both were enthusiastic supporters of Clinton’s war against Yugoslavia in 1999, which marked a significant turning point not only for America and NATO but also for the West as a whole. It was the first time in American history that the principle of state sovereignty, and of the rule of law itself, were subverted in the name of an allegedly humanitarian ideology of velvet-totalitarianism.

The Clintons’ disregard for old international norms and mechanisms for the protection of

national liberties, or their misuse as tools of their destruction, was as revolutionary on the global scene as Obama's presidency will be domestically. In that sense Hillary Clinton's appointment may reflect Obama's understanding that they are partners in the same project of transforming reality to fit their ideological preferences. At a less lofty level this decision may nevertheless prove to be his first major blunder. It is difficult to imagine Obama - or anyone else - keeping the Clintons under control for an extended period of time. He has made himself hostage not only to Hillary's inevitable games and whims, but also to the future conduct of her husband.

Bill Clinton made his comeback in September 2005, when he assembled 800 prime ministers, kings and other worthies to launch the Clinton Global Initiative to address „poverty, global warming, religious conflict and better governance.“ He has gone far since. There are 208,000 donors to the William J. Clinton Foundation, which covers the Global Initiative as well as his presidential library. The list includes controversial associates like Frank Giustra, the Canadian billionaire who went with Bill Clinton to Kazakhstan and subsequently obtained a \$425m mining contract there. Even as his wife was negotiating the Cabinet deal with Obama in late November, Clinton was in Kuwait giving a half-million-dollar speech on the global financial crisis, compliments of the host country's National Bank. The potential for scandal is considerable.

Hillary's ambition is another ticking bomb. She is presenting a smiling face now, but she detests the man who stole the nomination she regarded as rightfully hers. There will never be a relationship of trust and confidence between them.

“Two of the nation's greatest secretaries of state in the modern period, Dean Acheson and Henry Kissinger, were not personally close but were intellectually bonded to their presidents,” notes [Walter Isaacson](#), the co-author of “The Wise Men,” a book about America's postwar foreign policy establishment. The comparison is not apt. Neither Acheson nor Kissinger were presidential hopefuls. Hillary Clinton, by contrast, sees herself as destined to be the first woman president. If the attainment of that goal demands contradicting, undermining, or otherwise betraying the first black president, she will do it.

With Obama at the Oval Office and Hillary Clinton at State, America is less likely than ever to rediscover a world in which she will be secure and free, and will not threaten security and freedom of others. Those goals are inseparable from the preservation of our identity and our liberty at home. They are unattainable because this country's domestic liberty and identity are at greater peril than ever.

This government cannot articulate foreign policy strategies founded upon the notion of America as a real, completed nation, because the chief executive wants to turn it into a very different nation.

The United States could have and should have rediscovered the definable American Interest, and proclaimed it to be the foundation of its diplomacy, as befits a coherent and harmonious polity.

It was not to be, alas. May God help us all: Kyrie eleison.

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