

Perry calls Obama's Israel policy 'naïve, arrogant, misguided and dangerous'

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Rick Perry accused President Obama of pursuing a policy of "appeasement" of Palestinians. (AP photo)

Texas Gov. Rick Perry said today that President Obama had pushed U.S.-Israeli relations to "the precipice" through "naïve, arrogant, misguided and dangerous" policies.

Appearing with Jewish American leaders and Israeli political figures in New York City, the Republican presidential candidate decried the Obama administration approach to the Middle East as a "policy of appeasement" and "a dangerous insult" to Americans and Israelis alike.

The Texas governor, who has been advised on foreign policy by some of the leading neo-conservatives of the George W. Bush administration, blamed Obama for "the Palestinian gambit to establish statehood" that is now roiling the United Nations.

Perry said he was "indignant" at the Obama administration's Middle East "policy of moral equivalency, which gives equal standing to the grievances of Israelis and Palestinians." He described the president's overall foreign policy as "a muddle."

The Republican candidate timed his remarks to come just minutes before President Obama addressed the United Nations just a short distance away from the hotel where Perry was appearing.

Here is the prepared text of Perry's remarks in New York:

Thank you. Let me begin by thanking Dr. Solomon Frager and Aron Hirtz for helping us organize this press conference today.

I am joined today by a diverse group of Jewish leaders from here and abroad who share my concern that the United Nations could take action this week to legitimize the Palestinian gambit to establish statehood in violation of the spirit of the 1993 Oslo Accords.

We are indignant that certain Middle Eastern leaders have discarded the principle of direct negotiations between the sovereign nation of Israel and the Palestinian leadership, and we are equally indignant that the Obama Administration's Middle East policy of appeasement has encouraged such an ominous act of bad faith.

Simply put, we would not be here today at the precipice of such a dangerous move if the Obama Policy in the Middle East wasn't naïve, arrogant, misguided and dangerous.

It must be said, first, that Israel is our oldest and strongest democratic ally in the Middle East and has been for more than 60 years. The Obama Policy of moral equivalency, which gives equal standing to the grievances of Israelis and Palestinians, including the orchestrators of terrorism, is a dangerous insult.

There is no middle ground between our allies and those who seek their destruction. America should not be ambivalent between the terrorist tactics of Hamas and the security tactics of the legitimate and free state of Israel. By proposing "indirect talks" through the U.S. rather than between Palestinian leaders and Israel, this administration encouraged the Palestinians to shun direct talks.

Second, it was wrong for this Administration to suggest the 1967 borders should be the starting point for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. When you consider this suggestion was made on the eve of the Israeli Prime Minister's visit, we see in this American Administration a willingness to isolate a close ally and to do so in a manner that is insulting and naïve.

Third, by injecting the issue of 1967 borders in addition to a construction freeze in East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements, the Obama Administration has put Israel in a position of weakness and taken away their flexibility to offer concessions as part of the negotiation process.

Indeed, bolstered by the Obama Administration's policies and apologists at the U.N., the Palestinians are exploiting the instability in the Middle East hoping to achieve their objective without concessions or direct negotiations with Israel.

The reason is simple: if they perceive they can get what they want from the U.N. without making any concessions why

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While the administration is right to finally agree to fight the Arab resolution at the U.N., it bears repeating that we wouldn't be here today if they had stuck to some basic principles concerning Palestinian statehood:

First, Palestinian leaders must publicly affirm Israel's right to exist, and to exist as a Jewish state;

Second, President Abbas must persuade all factions including Hamas to renounce acts of terrorism and release kidnapped Israeli Gilad Shalit, and;

Third, Palestinian statehood must be established only through direct negotiations between the Palestinian leadership and the nation of Israel.

By not insisting on these principles, the Obama Administration has appeased the Arab Street at the expense of our own national security interests. They have sowed instability that threatens the prospects of peace.

Israel's security is critical to America's security. We must not forget it was Israel that took out the nuclear capabilities of Iraq in 1981 and Syria in 2007. In both instances, their actions made the free world safer.

Today, the greatest threat to the security of Israel and, by extension, a threat to America, is the Iranian government developing a nuclear arsenal. One thing is clear: we must stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Economic sanctions must be tightened and increased and all options must remain on the table to stop a brutally repressive regime from acquiring a nuclear capability.

To date, we have fumbled our greatest opportunity for regime change. As average Iranian citizens were marching on Tehran in the Green Revolution in 2009, America was wasting precious time on a naive policy of outreach to both the Iranian and Syrian governments.

Who knows what the leadership of Iran would look like today if America had done everything in its power to provide diplomatic and moral support to encourage the growing movement of dissidents who sought freedom.

Our actions in recent years have destabilized the Middle East. We have been complacent in encouraging revolt against hostile governments in Iran and Syria and we have been slow to recognize the risks posed by the new regime in Egypt and the increasingly strained relationship between Israel and Turkey.

It is vitally important for America to preserve alliances with moderate Muslim regimes and Muslim leaders who seek to preserve peace and stability in the region. But today, neither adversaries nor allies alike, know where America stands.

Our muddle of a foreign policy has created greater uncertainty in the midst of the "Arab Spring." And our policy of isolating and undermining Israel has only encouraged our adversaries in their aggression.

With the end-run on Palestinian statehood imminent before the U.N., America must act swiftly.

First, every nation within the U.N. must know America stands with Israel and the Oslo accord principle of direct negotiations without equivocation.

Second, America must make it clear that a declaration of Palestinian Statehood in violation of the spirit of the Oslo accords could jeopardize our funding of U.N. operations.

Third, the Palestinians must know their gambit comes with consequences in particular that America will have to reconsider the \$4 billion in assistance we have provided to the Palestinians over the last 17 years.

Fourth, we should close the PLO office in Washington if the U.N. grants the standing of a Palestinian state.

And fifth, we must signal to the world, including nations like Turkey and Egypt whom we have considered allies in recent years, that we won't tolerate aggression against Israel.

Israel is our friend and ally. I have traveled there several times, and met with its leaders. It is not a perfect nation, but its existence is critical to America's security in the world.

It is time to change our policy of appeasement toward the Palestinians to strengthen our ties to the nation of Israel, and in the process establish a robust American position in the Middle East characterized by a new firmness and a new resolve.

If America does not head off the aggression of forces hostile to Israel we will only embolden them.

That would be a tragic mistake.

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