

I try to be a political centrist, and have done so for both Democratic and Republican presidents---until now. The Trump administration's foreign policy has mostly made me wince, but a couple of ideas have possibilities: the Jerusalem issue and changing our immigration laws from family reunion to useful skills.

The initiatives that trouble me are those which only cancel the initiatives of former presidents, such as the Pacific Trade Agreement and the Iranian Agreement. President Trump is fixated in obliterating everything done by his predecessor, President Obama. Our tradition is that foreign policy is bipartisan, and that our foreign policy quarrels were not aired to the world. Traditional Republicans and Democrats used to agree that free trade was good, and that promoting global rule of law (actually American values) was a good thing.

I remember, however, when after World War II, the Marshall Plan saved Europe from Communist domination. Our presidents of both parties saw the value of spending this money, but some of the more conservative members of Congress griped that we shouldn't be giving "charity." They were overruled and were wrong. This money was well spent.

But bipartisanship started to unravel when the Republican right wing took up sexual issues as their emphasis: fixating on contraception and abortion. Democratic presidents would fund medical aid funds that covered women around the world for women exhausted from excessive childbearing in need of the contraception and abortion available to women the west. Republican presidents would stop funding these programs and the next Democratic president would restore them. It is happening again, and it is difficult to see an end to this!

But back to initiatives that I think are good: the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is long overdue. Every so often, an American president breaks with long practice that has run its course with no further benefit. President Obama did this in recognizing Cuba, joining the rest of the western world at last. He noted that we have relations with China and had with Communist Russia, and our 75-year shunning of Cuba has borne no fruit. That was a good break from a useless policy.

The Trump foreign policy establishment has done the same with our long-standing and useless hope that until the Palestinians and Israelis arrive at a "final settlement" of their border issues, Jerusalem should be left in limbo as far as moving our embassies to what is obviously Israel's capital. President Trump has made this change in policy in a ham-handed manner, doing it without negotiating some concessions from either Israelis or Palestinians, which has created a response of outrage from all of our allies. However, the basic reason for this initiative is, I believe, sound. It is about time.

To hold hope forever that the Palestinians will agree to anything short of total occupation of the Holy Land is like believing in the tooth fairy. Reasonable Palestinians have either left the country for better lives or have been driven out by the Islamists who have usurped political power among them. Can anyone admire how Gaza is run? There are very few Palestinian Christians left in the region. The last Palestinian elections were years ago, and they resulted in "one man, one vote, one time."

That the majority of the UN General Assembly voted against Trump's initiative does not mean that they are right. The Muslim countries and their left-wing European allies have always shared one thing: they hate Jews and resent a successful Israel.

The fear that this Jerusalem initiative will set off a region-wide violent reaction has proven foolish. The Palestinian people are exhausted and discouraged. They can see that their former supporters in the region, the Arab states, no longer give a hoot; even the ferocious Saudis find more benefit in teaming with the Israelis against their common foes: the Iranians and ISIS, than supporting the Palestinians.

As for changing immigration priorities to useful talents (agricultural workers and engineers) rather than bringing brides from backward villages, is now the policy in Canada. It is a good idea.

677 words

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