Obama’s Lame-Duck Stunt on Israel

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Our founding Fathers were brilliant in many ways, but they committed an obvious mistake by writing a Constitution that didn’t send the president packing immediately following the election of a successor. That error has led to serious abuse over the years, and to a foreign policy blunder by outgoing President Obama.

Allowing presidents to stick around after a replacement is elected but before the replacement’s term begins has led to misdeeds in the past. On his last day in office, President Bill Clinton pardoned fugitive billionaire Marc Rich. George W. Bush issued a flurry of last-minute regulations meant to tie the hands of his successor.

Now Obama, ushered into office on the promise of a new kind of politics, is repeating the sins of the past by failing to recognize his time is over. His attempt to isolate Israel on his way out the door is the last wheeze of a feeble foreign policy.

The phrase “lame duck” originally referred to bankrupt investors in 18th-century England for the way they waddled under the burden of debt. The more modern usage describes politicians nearing the end of their term. As Nation magazine said in 1910, they are “lame ducks in the sense that they have been winged, but hope to preen their plumage again.”

Obama has decided to spread his feathers over the issue of Israeli settlements.

Israel, like America and the rest of the world, is facing a threat from radical Islamists. To create a secure buffer zone between themselves and the people who want to kill them, Israel builds settlements in areas they confiscated following their victory against Arab aggressors in the 1967 Six Day War.

The settlements are controversial policy, but it was always assumed they would be part of any peace negotiation between the Palestinians and Israelis. By refusing to cast a veto against the United Nations Security Council’s 14-0 vote calling Israeli settlements “a flagrant violation of international law,” Obama has not only abandoned longstanding tradition. He has also lost sight of the larger war in which the goal of destroying Israel is just a sub-conflict. Violent radical Islam has as its ultimate ambition the subjugation of the entire world.

Thinking of the Arab-Israeli conflict the way Obama does, as a regional rivalry, is badly outdated. Resolving it will not appease religious fundamentalists. Many parts of the Muslim world refuse to accept Israel’s right to exist within any borders.

The same shortsightedness about the magnitude of the threat was on display when Obama said he trusted the mullahs in Iran to develop nuclear power responsibly and not use it to fulfill their vow to wipe Israel off the map. Few believed Osama bin Laden’s threats against America, and then 9/11 happened.

The greatest outrage is that Obama threw Israel to the wolves at the UN, where pressure from Arab and other Muslim countries has disproportionate influence. After all, this is the same group that gave Yasser Arafat a standing ovation when he addressed the General Assembly wearing a holstered gun on his hip.

President-elect Trump has indicated he will be far more sympathetic to Israel. He seems to understand there is just one conflict in the world today and abandoning Israel is no way to treat a friend. But instead of cooperating with the incoming administration, Obama has decided to impose his bygone mindset.

Men and women are dying every day in the war with radical Islam. As President Obama counts down the days remaining in his term, the world would be better off if he would go sit quietly in the corner.