

Biden Administration Walks a Tightrope on Israel-Hamas War Amid Hypocritical Calls From the Left for 'Proportionality'



by Conrad Black

It is difficult to read with confidence the tea leaves on Israel and Hamas. The usual invertebrate suspects scurried into the tall grass with their customary dispatch, after approximately five syllables of regret at the infamies of Hamas, the United Nations secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, started the customary agitation for a cease-fire.

The central organization of the European Union managed

expressions of moral outrage for a day or two, about average for them where there is such a lopsided absence of moral equivalence, before the usual waffling about "proportionality."

The left-wing press in most of the western world attempted to treat it as just another border incident, but the more militant pro-Palestinian factions abroad and the woke Israelophobes of America who see Israel as a white, prosperous, successful extension of the America they have been taught to hate in their intellectually bankrupt universities have demonstrated in unusual numbers.

This appears to be a demonstration of the phenomenon by which when a favored non-white, unsuccessful, and angry group commits a particularly heinous act, public expressions of support for it must be amplified to demonstrate that despite its crimes, the justice of its cause is immutable.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, the greatest depths of hypocrisy have been achieved at the UN by the Russian coterie of failed and contemptible states. In February 2023, on a resolution in the General Assembly to end the war in Ukraine, Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, Mali, Nicaragua, and Syria, all joined Russia in opposing the resolution, and thus affirming that the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the indiscriminate destruction of that country with great civilian casualties and dislocation was a good thing.

On October 27 of this year a resolution at the same place calling for a truce in Gaza was voted and the same countries all supported the resolution, so humanitarianism has its moments. It must prevail over the temptation to retaliate against the sadistic massacre of innocent people, but cannot be invoked against aggressive war or allowed to prevent the punishment of such a ghastly capital crime as a woman not wearing a hijab in public in Iran.

The conduct of the Biden administration poses a particular conundrum. Since this president has an aversion to any previously recognizable notion of leadership – without which a vacuum develops in the greatest national office in the world with unforeseeable consequences – he has solemnly planted the American flag beside Israel's right to defend itself, while cautioning Israel is to cooperate in getting the return of the hostages and to avoid unnecessary violence against Gazan civilians.

Thus, we must have retaliation blended with reconciliation, righteous deterrence with superhuman patience, and mixed signals while the leader of Israel's greatest ally and the most powerful nation in the world tries to suck and blow at the same time.

For practical and public relations reasons, Israel urgently wishes the support of America, as it may need resupply from that country as this war deepens. It hopes this administration will be reliable, as Richard Nixon famously was in the Yom Kippur War fifty years ago, when in the midst of the greatest crisis of his life Nixon had the steadiness of purpose effectively to supply Israel with a new air force and to deter Russia with the assertion of a state of partial mobilization.

President Biden is aware that 65 percent of Americans support Israel taking whatever measures it deems necessary to prevent such outrageous crimes ever being committed by Hamas against it again. He is also aware that a large percentage of Democrats are of the woke far left anti-Israel variety who clog and fester incessantly in the Democratic breeding grounds and support centers of academia and the media.

The administration response has been a tightrope-act of some virtuosity, but that is not what these circumstances require. Those presenting administration policy as equivocal and placatory are referred to American efforts to dissuade Israel from retribution and focus on restoration of normalized

conditions and the return of hostages. Sending two aircraft carrier strike groups to the region has been represented to the hawkish majority of Democrats in Congress as deterrence, and to the anti-Israeli far left faction of Democrats as an appropriate gesture but not an actual use of force.

Secretary Blinken has a Holocaust background in his family and gave an excellent address when standing beside Prime Minister Netanyahu, but his actions continue to be more of those of an altruistic conciliator than a geopolitical strategist. A note of farce, which almost always enters into any Biden activity, was added when in his one-day trip to the Middle East he was boycotted by the president of Egypt, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the King of Jordan, in protest against a supposed Israeli missile that struck a Gaza hospital, which turned out to be an Islamic Jihad missile which landed in the hospital parking lot.

When Iran attacked American positions in Syria, and the U.S. Air Force responded by destroying a couple of Iranian warehouses, the administration represented it as a forceful response to the Iranian regime, which is so loathsome it has not attracted much support even from the woke Democratic American left. To impartial observers, it appeared an ineffectual reply to an outrageous provocation, of the kind that normally effectively elicits further provocations, just as the inadequate responses to the Khobar Towers, United States Ship *Cole*, and East African embassy bombings led to the horrible attacks of September 11 at New York and Washington.

In such a politically immature and volatile area the kind of ambiguity that the Biden administration is showing because of its lack of political strength and coherence at home is particularly dangerous. Unfortunately, the most likely alternative president, Donald Trump, is also sending mixed messages: he is unambiguous in his support of Israel but that is tempered by his annoyance with Mr. Netanyahu for what Mr. Trump considers, with reason, to have been Mr. Netanyahu's

dishonest treatment of the 2020 Qasem Soleimani killing and a number of ungrateful reflections that Mr. Netanyahu inadvisedly made about Mr. Trump after he left office.

This is a time for Israel and the United States to ignore any pressures that detract from the most efficient pursuit of their legitimate national interests. Israel must be encouraged to achieve the complete destruction of Hamas without gratuitous collateral damage but also without a paralyzing fear of the effects upon the innocent, including the hostages.

America must not waver for a moment in its active recognition that its clear moral duty and unmistakable national interest require any assistance Israel may reasonably ask for the accomplishment of the elimination of the Hamas terrorist apparatus. No country attempted to lecture the United States about proportionality after 9/11 or urged a cease-fire on it after Pearl Harbor – where the Japanese did not attack civilians. No such pious humbug or rank hypocrisy should be taken seriously now.

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