

Dishonourable Liberals keep turning on Israel

By Conrad Black

The two principal foreign and strategic crises of this year, Ukraine and Israel, the federal government has a defensible record on the first but not on the second. In both cases it appears to be motivated entirely by domestic political equations without a glance at strategic requirements, let alone the course of national honour. For a country where Prime Ministers Chrétien, Harper, and Justin Trudeau have allowed our military capabilities to atrophy so badly that the chief assurance of our national security is to keep the telephone number of the Pentagon constantly at hand when we need the Americans to protect us, this government's policy toward the Gaza war, in addition to being completely mistaken, is also extremely pompous. (Paul Martin wanted to explore the possibilities of Canada taking responsibility for its own defense, but his government was defeated before he could get to grips with this issue; the fact that he even thought of it should not be forgotten.)



Anti-Israel protesters leave the University of Toronto campus after clearing tents and signage Wednesday July 3, 2024. PHOTO BY PETER J. THOMPSON /National Post

It is the usual pious and cowardly humbug that causes Ottawa to announce it is suspending the sales of some non-lethal military equipment to Israel

because it has the effrontery to opine that the Israeli Defense forces are insufficiently protective of the lives of civilian Palestinians in Gaza. But it is breathtaking that Canada should include in this practically irrelevant step an embargo on some equipment to the United States that it suspects the Americans might pass on to Israel. This initiative is a trifecta of fatuous error. First, it is clear from thoroughly available evidence that Israel has achieved an unprecedentedly low ratio of civilian to authentic military casualties for modern urban counter-guerrilla warfare. This is especially difficult as the enemy in this case, Hamas, proudly states that civilian casualties are useful to its propaganda campaign (which has brainwashed our foreign policy-makers), and which habitually embeds its terrorist cadres in and near schools, hospitals, and places of worship to incite as much collateral damage on its own population as possible.

Second, it departs completely from any real concept of the nature of war. The invasion of Israel on October 7 and the slaughter of more than a thousand Israeli, mostly civilians, was intended and received as an act of war. Wars are not fought by dropping pamphlets or posturing with trivial gestures. As General Douglas MacArthur famously said during the Korean War, "In war there is no substitute for victory." This is particularly the case in the current war in Gaza as Hamas has made it clear that it will never accept the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. As long as that condition prevails, there can be no peace and Israel's pledge to exterminate Hamas as a terrorist force enables it accurately to be described in the Wilsonian phrase: "a war to end war." Canada's government is engaged in a contemptible assertion of moral relativism between the heroic and democratic state of the long wronged Jewish people and a ragtag of vicious terrorists happy to be the cannon fodder of the principal terrorism-promoting state in the world – the primitive racist totalitarian theocracy of Iran.

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Finally in the trifecta, in the bankruptcy of their imagination, our foreign policy makers have taken up the trite evasion of the outgoing Biden administration, that "Israel has a right to defend itself," but we reserve the right to coach

it on how to do that and this effectively limits self-defence to the expulsion of invaders but muffled and insulated retaliation against the invaders after they have been evicted from Israel. This is a formula for perpetual conflict and is a moral and military under-reaction to the enormity of Hamas' provocation. What our government imagines it is accomplishing with this pallid, torpid, and ludicrous gesture surely escapes the imagination of all interested parties.

It must slightly bemuse the United States government that it is boycotted by Canada, which has benefited from an American guarantee of our security since President Franklin D. Roosevelt, speaking at Queen's University in Kingston in 1938, said that the United States would not "stand idly by" if Canada were invaded by any power from another continent. (This was the beginning of that phrase, which went on to widespread use and was expanded by Chinese leader Mao Zedong to his frequent assertion that he would not "stand idly by with folded arms" if various unwished-for things were to occur.) Prime Minister Mackenzie King responded that it would be Canada's duty to assure that no one crossed Canadian territory to attack the United States. We have effectively dumped our defence into the lap of the Americans while going out into the world inflicting on it a wishful pantomime accompanied by platitudes no one wants to hear. The people of Canada do not equate Israel with a terrorist operation and they are tired of the antisemitic antics of some in the Muslim community, as well of their sophomoric sympathizers who remind us by their annoying demonstrations, blockades, and graffiti of the depth we have plumbed with our hideously expensive and dysfunctional education system.

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Fortunately, our government has done better with Ukraine. We did help train up the Ukrainian army which has so distinguished itself in the last 2 1/2 years, and we've done more or less what we can in providing equipment and have been commendably supportive of Ukraine in the councils of the world. Canada supported the Maidan Revolution in 2014 which was a reasonable response to the policy coup d'état the Russians had promoted the year before in effecting Ukraine's withdrawal from Europe and embrace of Russia. The West's objectives in this war are to ensure that our victory in the

Cold War is not undone by the coercive reabsorption of Ukraine into Russia, that Ukraine emerges as a state of universally recognized legitimacy and no longer in the penumbral region of Russia's "near-abroad." Revised borders can more or less recognize the military facts on the ground, and Russia does have some claim against pre-war Ukraine, though it had no right to attempt to conquer or otherwise dominate or emasculate Ukraine. It is in the West's interests to help rebuild a Ukraine that enters the European Union and NATO and we have no interest in a complete humiliation of Russia. We wish an honourable peace, "a peace of the brave," in Charles de Gaulle's phrase (re Algeria), and the immediate reconstruction of the West's relations with Russia to assist it out of its disadvantageous embrace with the People's Republic of China. If the Ukraine war can be ended more or less like this, there would be no reason for NATO and Russia not to offer a combined security guarantee of Ukraine in its revised borders with a general non-aggression pact between themselves.

This Canadian government is unlikely to have much of a role in this process, but at least we're not complicating the lives of those who will. We could do worse, and much better.

Note: Contrary to what I wrote here last week, Winston Churchill received advice but not a loan from Bernard Baruch, but as my learned friend Bob Lemond, reminds me, he did receive several loans from [Henry Strakosch](#) of the Economist, which was publicized in the German media in the thirties, but had nothing to do with Zionism.

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