

If This Pause in the Conflict in Gaza Is Allowed To Turn Into a Durable Ceasefire, It Would Be a Decisive Defeat for Israel



by Conrad Black

If Israel, as its leaders and President Biden pledge will not be the case, allows this pause in the conflict to turn into a durable cease-fire in which completely innocent Israeli civilians, many of them children, women, and elderly people, have been seized and removed as hostages are gradually returned in exchange for a much higher number of legitimately convicted Palestinian terrorists, and the conflict effectively ends here, it will be a decisive defeat for Israel.

There is no equivalence whatsoever between the seizure and removal of citizens in the midst of a slaughter of the innocents in breach of an agreed cease-fire, and the apprehension and conviction of terrorists. The atrocities of October 7 committed by Hamas after invading Israel were, by virtue of their horrifying proportions, an opportunity for Israel to do what it has stated through all the spokesman of an instantly formed national unity government it will do: completely destroy Hamas as a military force.

Iran and Hezbollah have already acknowledged that they will not intervene on a significant scale in this war. The other Arab powers, despite the customary lip service they give the Palestinian cause, detest terrorism as much as Israel does. Terrorists assassinated President Sadat of Egypt in 1981 and the grandfather of the present King Abdullah of Jordan in 1951 and have torn Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to pieces.

From the rise of the pan-Arab nationalist leader Gamal Abdul Nasser to the presidency of Egypt in 1953, and the murder of the Iraqi royal family in 1958 until relatively recently, the Palestinian cause was a splendid fraud to gull uninformed and historically ignorant people in order to accuse Israel of being a Western-imposed usurpation of Arab territory.

As long as Turkey was impotently knocking on the door of Europe and Iran was either a firm Western ally under the Shah or an aberrant theocracy fighting off the aggressions of Iraq's Saddam Hussein, raising this sob-story about the deprived Palestinians who have never been a defined people or a functioning jurisdiction of their own, was a useful distraction of the Arab masses from the misgovernment that almost all of them suffered. (The Palestinians are a tragic and castaway group, who have been moved about as pawns, and still are, by Iran, but their claims to all of Israel "from the river to the sea" are moonshine.)

Once the inspired statesmanship of President Carter helped

push the Shah out of power and bring in the mad and belligerent ayatollahs, followed by the brain waves of President George W. Bush which removed Hussein as any kind of check on the Iranians, and as a bonus produced the election of Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza, and the Turks grew tired of being rejected by the Europeans and began encroaching on the Arabs as the Iranians did the same, the Arabs became fearful of their ancient Turkish and Persian enemies (and oppressors).

They were encouraged and abetted by the Russians and the Chinese in this mischief, and the Arab powers lost interest in antagonizing Israel and promoting the self-serving melodrama of an illicit Jewish occupation of Israel. There seems to be general agreement that the October 7 outrages were provoked by a desperate ambition of Iran to ward off a peace agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Whatever may happen with the hostages, the strategic realities and moral imperatives of the contemporary Middle East require that this opportunity to extirpate Hamas as a military and terrorist force which Israel has every justification to do, not be squandered. Again, it is difficult to be confident, much less certain, of exactly what the Biden administration is telling the Israeli government. There seems, though, no doubt that it is strongly encouraging this pause.

There is now solid bipartisan support in the Congress and professed solidarity in the administration for a large military aid package for Israel and all polls indicate solid American public support for this action also. It is outrageous to see mobs in front of the White House smearing red paint on the gate posts and holding up banners accusing the president of genocide. The idea that any such allegation could be made against Israel or anyone who supports Israel of all countries, is incomparably scandalous given the horrifying genocidal assault upon European Jews within living memory. And whatever criticism may be leveled against Mr. Biden, it does not

include ambivalence about genocide in any circumstances.

The Biden administration's problem stems from 2020, when the Democrats, in their desperation to defeat President Trump, gave aid and comfort to the domestic forces of anti-American and antisemitic and broadly anti-white nihilistic lawlessness. It has nurtured a viper, which is now biting it. The Biden reelection effort is disintegrating and the administration is trying to respond effectively to the bipartisan majority of Americans that wishes to support Israel without completely alienating the far left whose presence was practically ignored and whose summer-long riots in 2020 were variously dismissed as "peaceful protests" and evidence of the chaos generated by Mr. Trump.

What is likely to happen is that the powers that be in the Democratic Party will persuade the president that it is time for him to announce that he will not seek reelection. They can primary the vice president out of the succession race. Yet if they think that Governor Newsom of California or any other visible and plausible Democratic presidential candidate is going to have an easy time standing for the reelection of the party that has given America the quavering Biden leadership standing on the socialist Sanders platform, then they are delusional.

There is no other evident way of emancipating the Democratic Party from the taint of the extreme and anti-American left and regaining any support from the Trump Republicans. It is conceivable that if Mr. Biden withdraws some combination of Mr. Trump's legal travails and a general sentiment that a change is called for in both parties it could give Nikki Haley a chance to be the Republican nominee.

This is a longshot and in any case has almost nothing to do with the current crisis in Gaza. The only foreign power whose support Israel needs is America, and the only circumstances in which the Israeli government could be dissuaded from carrying

out its promise to deal Hamas a mortal blow as a terrorist organization are if Israel were deserted by the United States.

The atrocities of October 7 committed by Hamas produced a double watershed: in order for peace to be possible that force which has made it clear it will never accept Israel as a Jewish state has to be eradicated. In order for Israel to conduct such an operation from which the Arab powers will also benefit, America must maintain its support and that support must not be conditionalized in the slightest degree by the woke, self-hating cancer within the Democratic Party.

This is a Manichaeian conflict between legitimate good and stark evil and to a significant degree a proxy war between the United States and Iran. No political waffling must be allowed to confuse the issues or muddy the waters.

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