

The myth of demilitarization

written by David M. Weinberg | 29.12.2023

Israel's future is guaranteed by gutsy and patriotic teens, soldiers, and students.

Ready the rapid-response squads everywhere

written by David M. Weinberg | 29.12.2023

The establishment of civilian rapid-response security squads everywhere in Israel is more urgent than ever. This requires government investment and volunteer mobilization, including participation of the haredi sector.

Iran Fears Full-Scale Regional War

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 29.12.2023

Israel should attack the Qods Force apparatus in Iran and across the region.

Israel needs a “Doolittle raid”

written by Dr. David Wurmser | 29.12.2023

On April 18, 1942, sixteen US B-25 bombers attacked Tokyo. Of those, two were shot down. The rest reached Chinese regions where anti-Imperial forces saved them. Only one of the original 16 landed, in Vladivostok in Russia. All the rest –

precious assets for a US army stretched thinner than onion-skin – were shot down or ditched. The surviving crews, all of whom had been handpicked as the best of the best, were gone, captured, or unavailable for months. Eight among the crews were captured by the Japanese.

The result of the raid: marginal damage to Tokyo, and negligible damage to the industrial capacity of its empire. Every measure of tactics held this as an irresponsible waste of men and materiel at a time when America could ill afford to waste anything. And President Roosevelt – whose attentions and energy already were stretched to the limit — sought the raid, monitored its preparations, and then ordered the raid with impatience. His general staff all thought him mentally unwell and irresponsible.

And yet, the Doolittle raid (as it came to be called after its commander, James Doolittle) was one of the most important actions undertaken by the Americans and arguably represented the war's turning point. It was tactically disastrous and useless, but strategically cataclysmic.

Because it turned around American morale. It overshadowed – even erased – the growing wallowing in misery of the memory of December 7 and replaced it with a defined goal of the war through actions, not just words. Americans understood where they were headed and invested their energies now totally into victory rather sap their energy focused on their wounds. America had passed from fear and foreboding to becoming societally optimistic.

Japanese were unnerved because the impenetrable Islands – the islands which for 1500 years had never been penetrated because of the protective, mystical spirit of the Kamikaze wind – were penetrated and bombed. The Japanese general staff were humiliated, and their stature which rode so high in the five months since Pearl Harbor was tarnished. The killing of Japanese civilians in their capital, combined with the shame felt by the military command, created inescapable pressure to strike back in retribution. For Japan had understood that the raid had broken their full control of the situation, taken back some of the initiative and thus threatened to reverse its relentless strategic momentum.

The pressure took its toll: Japan advanced Admiral Yamamoto's invasion plans of Hawaii to retake the initiative and force a battle in Midway for which it had not fully prepared. In June 1942, only 7 months after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese

were catastrophically defeated there by a far smaller force because Japan had prematurely rushed to avenge its honor. Its controlled competence had given way to a grave misstep. While it still took another three years, Midway changed the direction of the war. Japan's strategic momentum was never regained, and America was on the straight road to victory, which greatly relieved Britain and cast a dark doubt over Hitler's aspirations in Europe. Thus, those sixteen planes with few bombs set the course of the whole war.

What does this have to do with Israel?

Israel faced its Pearl Harbor on October 7. The wound had given the Iranian camp great strategic initiative and shown the region that it was the strong horse, while Israel was complacent and possibly even too weak to survive in the long term. What followed was very much like the five-month period between December 7, 1941 and April 18, 1942 in World War II, where tactically the US might have begun to mobilize, societally it began to do what it had to do, but overall the strategic momentum had not been retaken. American morale was still sinking after the initial anger faded into the grim reality of a long war, and Japanese morale continued to rise as it withered America's.

Right now, Israel has considerable tactical initiative, but no strategic initiative. Hamas dictates the fate of the hostages and deals. Hamas governs the agenda of international pressures. The US state department controls the international diplomatic agenda. Hizballah defines the parameters of conflict on the Lebanese border. Yemen chooses when, where and how often it intervenes and caused international shipping to retreat into a defense crouch. Iraqi militias define how much the US and Israel can feel secure in Syria and on the Golan. Israel may possess tactical superiority in every theater, but it lacks strategic initiative and control in all of them. Iran is still driving everything.

As such, as a nation and society, Israeli will remain high but there are signs already now of fraying of focus, internal stresses, and lack of faith in the final goals. Or even their definition. Rhetoric is also misaligned: Iran is seen and blamed as the puppet master in terms of an "either we or they survive" showdown, but the war is fought entirely locally against Hamas as if it is a limited conflict rather than part of such a twilight struggle against Iran.

Wars are won through strategy, not tactics. Israel has reached that point where it

needs a Doolittle raid.

Israel not only needs to prop up Israeli moral to move beyond the shadow of October 7 (as the US had to move beyond the shadow of December 7), but to take actions that strategically signal this is about Iran. Perhaps action Iran regime itself but certainly against theaters right now languishing (Yemen, Iraq, Syria). Israel must take the strategic initiative and set the regional agenda to bear down on Tehran. Israel needs to take control of the agenda in every aspect and force Iran's hand into missteps. Israel needs a Doolittle raid, or several such raids.

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Don't you dare!

written by David M. Weinberg | 29.12.2023

Israeli leaders have no mandate to scale-back the assault on Hamas. The war cannot and must not end until Israel has achieved its legitimate military objectives in full.

The IDF has got its act together

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 29.12.2023

The foray into Jabalia is a successful model for continuing the offensive against Hamas. Israel must maintain a complete siege on Gaza.

Israel must crush Hamas

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 29.12.2023

It wasn't supposed to happen. The surprise attack by Hamas is an extremely severe blow to Israel's image of deterrence, beyond the direct, very heavy price it exacted from us physically and emotionally.

This attack also severely damages Israelis' trust in the security forces. The time will come for the hard questions, investigations and drawing conclusions. Right now it is only right to focus all attention and efforts on the success of the fighting and to strengthen the hands of the commanders and fighters from all the security forces, who, while suffering the painful price of failure, are required to gather their strength and lead the hard fighting against Hamas.

How do you prevent Hezbollah from joining the fighting ?

We are in a situation that will have historical repercussions. Not only Hezbollah but also Iran and other organizations are looking to see what happens. The more powerful and tougher our response against Hamas will be, then this will convey to Hezbollah that it is not worth its while joining the fighting against Israel. Israel's actions must turn the surprise attack by Hamas against Israel into Gaza's *nakba* (tragedy).

The IDF must crush Hamas, kill everybody that belongs to the organization and destroy everything connected to it. The pattern of surgical strikes must be abandoned and practices such as "knocking on the roof" (warning with non-explosive devices that a building is about to be razed) must end. The warnings to the residents have been given, and now the time has come for guns and not just planes.

With all due respect, reports on the number of attacks or the weight of bombs dropped or the number of targets blown up are not interesting. The only figure of interest right now is the number of terrorists killed in Gaza. Unfortunately, in the tough neighborhood where we live, this is the only deterrent.

Israel has no reason to rush the offensive. The only considerations that should guide it are security and operational matters. There is no need to fear international political pressure and "the legitimacy clock running out of time." As

long as 130 Israelis – children and the elderly – are held in Gaza, the international community will be forced to recognize Israel's right to continue fighting.

Beyond that, the IDF must immediately create a “security perimeter” – an area of approximately 300 meters east of the border, along its entire length, and announce that any Palestinian who enters this area risks his life, and accordingly set instructions for opening fire.

In the civil sphere: Israel should see itself freed from any civil-economic consideration. Israel's Gaza District Coordination and Liaison office should be abolished, and a total siege should be imposed on Gaza, with the crossings between Israel and Gaza completely closed. This includes passage of fuel and goods from Kerem Shalom, electricity supply should be reduced and the communication and internet connections in the entire Strip should be disrupted.

How to deal with world reaction to the steps now necessary ?

The world understands the situation very well. The countries of the world do not want to return to the era of ISIS. Hamas has brought them back to it. The monstrous attack provides full justification for unconventional measures on Israel's part. It is wrong to act under a stopwatch or out of fear of the reaction of the international community.

What about the expected impact on Judea and Samaria?

The events have contradictory effects. On the one hand, they raise morale in the Palestinian camp and provide inspiration for more attacks. On the other hand, the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria understand that Israel is currently in great pain and will not show tolerance towards provocations. I believe that a complete closure should also be imposed on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria. At this time, military efforts should be focused on Gaza, while no risks should be taken regarding terrorist attacks that might be inspired in Judea and Samaria.

Is there a connection between the Hamas attack and the rapprochement between Israel and Saudi Arabia?

I find it hard to believe that moving closer to Saudi Arabia had a real impact. In the eyes of Hamas, this could amount to another possible gain, but not a major consideration.

It is also too early to assess what the consequences of the situation are for normalization with Saudi Arabia, and whether this puts everything in jeopardy.

In any case, I suggest not to see our ambitions regarding Saudi Arabia as a consideration that should restrain our activities in Gaza. Even in Saudi Arabia, the similarities between the barbarism of Hamas and that of ISIS are recognized. Not everyone there will understand Israel's actions, but no one will doubt the justification.

Moreover, in the Kingdom, as in the entire Middle East, those who react strongly to such a criminal attack will be respected. At the end of the day, peace is made with the strong.

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Zionist Strategy for Israel

written by David M. Weinberg | 29.12.2023

On the day after Tisha BeA'v, it would be nice to write about national unity, shared destiny, moderation, and restraint. But I cannot ignore the kasach - the unbridled confrontation, the inflammatory demagoguery, the violent warmongering - that has become standard and acceptable behavior for some of Israel's once and supposed leaders.

There are very specific people responsible for this degradation, with Ehud Barak taking first place in the ugly contest for the most hateful, most extreme, most seditious rabble-rouser of all.

Former prime minister Ehud Barak appears at every anti-government protest rally and in every foreign television studio with preening self-confidence, sky-high arrogance, and the most untamed political language heard in this country in decades. He savages Prime Minister Netanyahu and anybody to the right of him as "dark and dangerous ultra-nationalists who are undermining the foundations of Zionism and Israeli democracy."

He blabbers uncontrollably about Israel becoming a “fascist state” and an “apartheid” country. He even called a recent Israeli Supreme Court ruling that went in Netanyahu’s favor “a Weimer Republic-like decision.”

This year he has escalated his rhetoric to talk about the “shattering of Israeli democracy,” the “darkest days Israel has known,” “imminent dictatorship in Israel,” and “silencing” by the right wing. (Funny, Barak doesn’t seem so silenced.)

In one speech I heard, Barak hurled the epithet “fascist” at Netanyahu three times, “dictator” at Justice Minister Levin four times, and “apartheid” at right-wing West Bank settlement policies another three times. He then accused all Israelis to his political right of wearing Nazi-style “selection eyeglasses” (mishkefei selectzia shel hayamin) – which is a disgusting political slur whether used by an antisemitic non-Jew or a born-again wannabe Israeli leader.

To this, Barak recently has added piercing, scornful characterizations of Netanyahu and his cabinet ministers as “jokes,” “jackasses,” “pissers,” “drivellers,” “simpletons,” and “people sick with autoimmune diseases.”

Barak delivers all this dreadful demagoguery alongside incessant use of the epithet “messianic” in describing policies of the right wing. This, of course, is supremely ironic, since the only messianism that exists in abundance in Ehud Barak’s presence is his own messianic self-assurance.

Ehud Barak’s near-antisemitic language is unacceptable

Whatever you think of the Netanyahu government or its judicial reform proposals, Barak’s wild exaggerations and exceedingly belligerent characterizations are disgusting. His use of near-antisemitic and pseudo-BDS language is unacceptable. His feral ambitions and savage hatreds clearly have propelled him off into the deep end.

WORST OF ALL, by far worst of all, is the lead role that Barak has taken in calling for subversion of the IDF through mass refusal-to-serve by Israeli soldiers and reserve duty officers.

Barak began barking about the need to refuse to serve in the IDF “under dictatorship” at a February Haaretz conference. “When a black flag of extreme

illegality flies over an army order, it is not just the right of a soldier to obey that order, it is his obligation," said Barak. "We are now facing the civilian equivalent of black flag illegality."

"Our only obligation is to liberal democracy as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. We have no obligatory contract with dictators, and history will judge to purgatory all those who submit to the dictates of dictators."

Asked whether he wasn't going too far with his call for mutiny in the military, Barak responded with his characteristic messianic self-possession that "we are the right side of history and we are not afraid of anybody or anything."

On Channel 12 television on July 6 Barak specifically called upon "air force pilots and front-line commandoes" to warn Netanyahu that if the so-called reasonability restriction legislation was passed, they would "refuse to serve a dictatorship, period."

Reportedly, the Israel Police have opened an investigation into the possibly treasonous remarks made by Ehud Barak, and by Yair Golan of Meretz, but don't hold your breath waiting for indictments. Prosecuting these people for sedition and concrete damage to the security of the State of Israel would not be politically correct.

It would require Israel's legal elites to admit, which they won't, that Barak's discourse is the true threat to Israeli democracy. It would require them to concede, which they won't, that those screaming the loudest about imminent threats to democracy are the people engaging in tactics that smack of dictatorship and lawlessness. It would force them to draw red lines, which they are unwilling to do, against the growing calls from Barak and his coterie to deny political and civil rights to anybody who thinks and votes differently, like ultra-Orthodox Jews.

THIS IS THE PLACE to remind readers of Ehud Barak's dismal political record. He was resoundingly defeated in the elections of 2001 and 2009, leading the once all-powerful Labor Party to a nadir. His term as prime minister was blessedly the shortest term of any Israeli prime minister. He was responsible for the helter-skelter retreat from Lebanon, which led to the rise of Hezbollah. His disastrous diplomatic policies led directly to the second intifada.

The last point is especially important. Barak betrayed the trust Israelis had given him, by agreeing at the July 2000 Camp David summit to divide Jerusalem and give away the Temple Mount. This was a radical diplomatic departure from the platform on which he had campaigned and which he had reaffirmed publicly just two months earlier. (So much for “democratic” behavior...)

This reckless gambit, for which Barak had no public mandate, terribly weakened Israel’s political hold on Jerusalem. It heedlessly broke an important and rightful Israeli diplomatic taboo about maintaining Jerusalem united under Israeli sovereignty.

This transgression undermined a core Jewish claim to legitimacy in Zion, which at source is rooted in the holiest place on earth to Jews – Jerusalem’s Temple Mount. It appreciably enfeebled Israel’s diplomatic fortitude. It drove Palestinian expectations sky-high and became the baseline for international demands that the city be split into two capitals. It later gave cover to other politicians on the Left (like Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni) to go astray too.

It also promptly led to Yasser Arafat’s so-called second intifada, the most murderous spree of Palestinian terrorism in Israel’s history.

Arafat incorrectly assumed that all Israelis would be as supine as Barak; that several dozen bus-bombers would push Israelis over the edge and bring about capitulation in Jerusalem and across Judea and Samaria.

And sure enough, Barak almost gave away the store at the January 2001 Taba summit, after his government had fallen and despite the raging intifada. For the first time, an Israeli prime minister imprudently accepted the 1967 lines (and 97% of Judea and Samaria) as the basis for a Palestinian state. Fortunately, Barak was swiftly kicked out of office, and Israelis proved far more resilient and loyal to their principles than either Barak or Arafat imagined.

Barak has never expressed remorse for his flagrant offenses: for the near plundering of Jerusalem, and for his near subversion of democracy. God only imagines to what insane ends of surrender Barak might go if he were to regain the reins of power.

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500 days of war in Ukraine

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 29.12.2023

Some 500 days have passed since armored columns shook the ground of Ukraine, but there is no end in sight for the war. The outbreak of hostilities ended the Pax Europaea that had reigned supreme since World War II, marking a historic milestone in the new world order. It is hard to tell if we are past the peak, but the results of this conflict will determine the global balance of power and impact the international norms, as well as shape our world for the next several decades.

Five days before the war, the annual Munich Security Conference took place in Germany. With the war drums already heard in the background, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleaded with NATO and Western leaders, saying, "What are you waiting for? Has our world completely forgotten the mistakes of the 20th century? I just want to make sure you and I read the same books. How did we get to the biggest security crisis since the Cold War?"

In what was the speech of his life, the Ukrainian leader called on the world to act immediately so that Russia's plot would be foiled. "Don't wait for the bombs; when they fall we will no longer need your sanctions," he warned, but to no avail. All those who believed that bloody wars can no longer happen in the 21st - or only in far-flung areas of the world - century got a rude awakening by reality. "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun," the Book of Ecclesiastes says.

Weakness invites evil. This is the first lesson from this war. While the methods of war keep changing due to technological advances and other developments, war's essence remains. Its human component continues to be the most important factor. Margaret Atwood once wrote: "Wars happen because the ones who start them think they can win."

It's hard to assess what impact the US actions in Afghanistan and the Middle East had on what has unfolded in Europe. At the very least, we can say that they were not a restraining factor in Russia's overall calculus. The lessons of the war in Ukraine highlight the need to resolve the Iranian issue. Iran's arrogance and its

self-confidence under the current US and European policies have demonstrated the West's eroding stature. This is clear in Tehran's brazen conduct on the nuclear issue and its destabilizing actions in the form of arming militias and other proxies, as well as expanding and enhancing its export and production of UAVs and missiles. Iran is not just involved in the war in Ukraine but also occupies a significant role in the re-establishment of an anti-West and anti-US axis. It has lent its support for Russia's war effort and the two have deepened their cooperation, while Iran has simultaneously come close to China, whose leader has recently said that it supports Iran's rights on the nuclear issue.

The regime in Tehran has picked up the West's weakness and is squeezing everything it can from it to its benefit. Iran is threatening the stability and peace of the entire world; there is no need for any additional proof.

The West's leaders, chiefly the US, now have an opportunity to implement the lessons of the war in Ukraine. They must look at what is going on in Europe and make a decision to change their posture toward Iran. They must assume that the current provocations of the regime will pale in comparison to what it would allow itself to do if it were to have a nuclear arsenal.

If history is any guide, we know that only a credible military threat will stop Iran's nuclear program. Such a threat from the US will not drag Washington into the war it seeks to avoid because the regime in Tehran knows full well what the balance of power is and the fate of other regional leaders who tried to use their force vis-a-vis the US. In fact, if the US fails to act forcefully against Iran, this will greatly increase the likelihood of a regional war that Washington can prevent.

The future of the world order is on the line. The US knows this, as do the Europeans. Let's hope that they marshal enough courage and leadership to make the right decisions.

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