Israel needs a strong spine

written by David M. Weinberg | 10.05.2024

As Israel approaches its 76th Independence Day, it must withstand ugly narratives of delegitimization that are crashing like tidal waves around the world and international dictates meant to emasculate the Jewish state.

It is maddening to see Western leaders and the supposedly great minds of Western academia succumb with equanimity to Hamas' genocidal agenda and obviously criminal conduct.

They disregard Hamas' anti-Semitic discourse and its record of Islamist oppression and human rights abuse. They overlook its total backing by Iran. They take little heed of its path of kidnappings, rockets, border-breaching massacres, and terror attack tunnels – with Palestinians as calculated cannon fodder. They profess to be concerned for Palestinian rights yet ignore Hamas' radical Islamic oppression of Palestinians alongside its murderous intentions against Israel.

It is exasperating that people pretend that Hamas' assaults on Israel's sovereignty and security have anything to do with demands for humanitarian aid or for a two-state solution.

Nonsense! Hamas has repeatedly blown up the civilian and humanitarian supply infrastructures that Israel has facilitated for Gaza, and instead spent hundreds of millions of dollars in aid on military attack infrastructures.

How is it that foreign ministers and foreign correspondents fail to appreciate that over the past 20 years Hamas rejected US, UN, EU, and Arab offers of billions of dollars of aid to the people of Gaza if only Hamas were to demilitarize, end terrorism against Israel, and recognize Israel through acceptance of previous Palestinian agreements with Israel?

How is it that they fail to credit Israel with trying to mollify Hamas by facilitating tens of millions of dollars of Qatari cash for Hamas in Gaza over the past decade? (Alas, this obviously was a failed strategy).

Instead, they complain that while at war Israel restricts supply convoys into Gaza and they worry aloud that Hamas will not get kid gloves treatment when the

fighting ends (such as the provision of cement and other building materials, which once again will poured in underground terror complexes instead of civilian reconstruction).

How is it that they call the Israeli-Palestinian death toll "disproportionate," suggesting that not enough Israelis have been killed to justify Israel's military counterstrikes on Hamas. How many more Israelis must die for the sake of immoral symmetry and ersatz Western scruples?

How is it that they ignore the fact that thousands of Hamas rockets fired from Gaza have fallen inside Gaza and likely are responsible for many Palestinian civilian deaths? How do they discount the fact that many of the Palestinian dead are clearly identified Hamas and Islamic Jihad military personnel – by admission of the terrorists themselves?

It also is galling that Western do-gooders seem to view Palestinian "Days of Rage," "Nakba Day" riots, and missile barrage eruptions as expected behavior. As if the Palestinians cannot help themselves from throwing a tantrum. As if responsible and reasonable behavior – such as negotiation, democratic and peaceful discourse, and normative state-building – cannot be demanded of the Palestinians.

This is the soft bigotry of low expectations from Palestinians, which is the counterpart of hard bigotry – impossible demands – made on Israel.

I sense that this stems from reluctance to internalize the fact that, despite Israel's Oslo Accord concessions and multiple peace offers ever since, much of the Palestinian national movement has not changed its goal of annihilating Israel and replacing it with a Palestinian state "from the river to the sea" or with an Islamic caliphate.

IN RESPONSE, Israel has no choice but to stiffen its spine; and in some matters to grow a spine. More than ever before, Israel must reject impossible international dictates and demands.

Among the wrong-headed ideas that must be rejected are Washington's insistence that Israel's "primary goal" must be provision of humanitarian aid to an enemy population in wartime, which is an absurdity never broached before in the history of wars.

Also to be rebuffed: American insistence that the necessary next stage of the Israeli military campaign to rout-out Hamas, in Rafah and the Philadelphi Corridor, is “unacceptable,” a “red line that must not be crossed.” This includes the Biden administration’s attempt to micromanage IDF operations, house-by-house, bullet-by-bullet; handcuffing Israel by denying it weapons and driving Israel into another disastrous draw against Hamas.

(This, from a country that has not won a war in 80 years, despite carpet bombing and killing hundreds of thousands of civilians in Vietnam, Cambodia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and more.)

Israel must also repudiate the arrogant talk in Western capitals of unilaterally recognizing Palestinian statehood and anointing the decrepit Palestinian Authority as a stabilizing force in Gaza. These are debilitating ideas that seed the likelihood of long-term strategic defeat for Israel.

Israel must also reject the erroneous strategic thinking that sees a grand soft deal with Iran as the panacea for all regional ills. Alas, the Biden administration seems more obsessed with thwarting the swagger of Israel than it is concerned with halting Iran’s race to nuclear weapons and its region-wide hegemonic ambitions.

AMBASSADOR Rabbi Dr. Yaacov Herzog (1921-1972) once explained why Israel sometimes stubbornly refuses to accept rational calculations of diplomatic cost/benefit that are politely or impolitely impressed on it by allies.

Israelis, he clarified, can shake-off the bleak prognostications advanced by both friends and enemies because of a deep-rooted belief in the power of Jewish history; by faith that Israel is guided by an astral calculus that is not always perceptible. This, he wrote, undergirds the willingness of Israelis to sacrifice for independence.

And thus, those who consider history only in terms of politics and international relations underestimate Israel. They apply temporal yardsticks of measurement to Israel but fail to fathom the processes at work behind the curtain of current affairs.

They fail to understand that Israel is on historic mission where the lines are blurred between imagination and reality, between the possible and the feasible. And so, Israel plows forward despite all critics and adversaries.

And at this very moment, true *atzmaut*, real independence, means that Israel must advance in defiance of those who seek to emasculate it (deny it weapons), of those who would prevent Israel from achieving its necessary and justified war goals of crushing Hamas and Hezbollah, countering Iran, and restoring this country's deterrent power.

Remember: None of the brutal dictatorships or arrogant empires throughout history that sought to destroy the physical core or sap the indomitable spirit of the Jewish People succeeded. Neither will they do so today.

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