

Don't patronize Israel

written by David M. Weinberg | 24.02.2024

There is a new, insidious and demeaning narrative taking root in Washington and other Western capitals, as well as in the international media, about Israelis. The storyline is that Israelis are too shocked and wounded by the Hamas attacks of October 7 to think straight; that they are too “traumatized” by the massacres of Simchat Torah to move smartly towards the “necessary and inevitable” two-state solution.

In this account, Israelis are too angry and revengeful to realize that Palestinian statehood is in their own self-interest. Accordingly, the politically correct class of international experts will have to impose Palestinian statehood on Israel for its own good, which it is too “traumatized” to clearly see.

A classic example of such patronizing, condescending analysis was the front-page New York Times story last weekend by Steven Erlanger, its star chief diplomatic correspondent in Europe, “who has reported from over 120 countries, including Thailand, France, Israel, Germany and the former Soviet Union.”

Erlanger “reported from Jerusalem, Army Base Julis, Tel Aviv, and Beersheba to try to get a sense of Israel’s mood four months into the war against Hamas.” His conclusion: Israelis are too “traumatized” to move forward. The word “traumatized” appeared no less than six times in his story.

Israelis are “newly vulnerable, traumatized, and mistrustful,” and therefore, “the idea of a Palestinian state seems further away than ever, as Israel’s Jews move rightward (and its Palestinians fear a backlash),” opined the chief European diplomatic correspondent.

A similar snooty analysis appeared yesterday in *Foreign Affairs* (the prestigious journal of the New York-based Council on Foreign Affairs, which reflects mainstream Democratic administration thinking). The inveterate US peace processor Martin Indyk pumps for the “resurrection of the two-state solution” as the inexorable, logical result of the latest Hamas-Israel “clash.” Sure enough, he argues that the US has to help Israel move past the “trauma that all Israelis suffered on October 7.”

Indyk's advice to US President Joe Biden is to "make clear the choice facing Israelis." They can continue on the road to a forever war with the Palestinians, or they can embrace a US day-after plan for solve-all Palestinian statehood and peace with Saudi Arabia. Biden, he argues, should pitch the deal directly to the Israeli public in a way that "would shift its attention from the trauma of October 7."

So, this is all that needs doing. America and the well-meaning world, whose statesmen are thinking astutely (unlike Israel's backwards leaders and tormented public), have to "shift Israeli attention" from the "traumas" of attack by Hamas!

They must massage Israeli feelings, give Israel a big hug, offer soothing "guarantees" of Palestinian demilitarization (even though Israel has been given such generous assurances before; remember the halcyon Oslo Accords?), and then nudge (force) Israel "forward" towards the good-old familiar and prudent two-state "solution."

But what if Israelis are not "traumatized" by October 7, but rather animated and alert? What if they are not intellectual weaklings, wounded babies who have to be coddled and coaxed into making adult decisions? What if Israelis are thinking straight?

Could it be that after 30 years of peace process perfidies and assaults, Israelis have reached intelligent, realistic conclusions that are different than those of Martin Indyk or US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken? Perhaps they have judiciously determined that, at least in the near term, Palestinian statehood is the wrong policy; that this would only give a prize to the genocidal terrorists?

What if Israelis think that only when the well-armed (by Iran) enemies on their southern and northern borders are resoundingly defeated (and this may take a decade of warfare) can a moderate compromise peace emerge?

What if Israelis have coldly concluded that only when the Palestinian national movement is deradicalized (and this might take a decade or more of tough medicine) might a diplomatic deal be possible? And what if a grand takeaway is that less-threatening long-term alternatives must replace the so-called EKP ("every knows paradigm") involving full-scale, runaway Palestinian statehood?

Yes, Israelis indeed are wounded and angry. However, this has sharpened their

thinking, not clouded it. In my view, Israelis hold pertinent, well-rooted understandings of their diplomatic challenges and opportunities. They are informed and enlightened, reenergized patriotically, determined to defeat all enemies and to rebuild Israel more magnificently than ever. They remain ready to grab diplomatic breakthroughs where such are realistically possible.

Let us be clear: Israelis are not enfeebled, immobilized, or confused. They will not brook global contempt.

Another parallel, sinister narrative that can be heard here and there is that Israeli “rage” has dictated IDF battlefield behavior; that the Israeli military has gone berserk, bombing the hell out of Gaza indiscriminately - and committing war crimes along the way.

In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas massacres and rapes, the world “understood” this rage and swallowed the furious IDF counter-assault, but now Israeli “rage” has taken the fight too far. So goes the storyline.

This false, malicious tale must be debunked, too. The opposite is true: Israel has kept its “rage” firmly in check. Its military has fought against Hamas in Gaza with precision and professionalism, accepting upon itself restrictions and limitations far beyond that of any army in history - anywhere, under any circumstances. Unchained rage using Israel’s full firepower would have looked vastly different.

Here too, the insinuation of Israeli “rage” driving government policy and military operations is superciliousness; an arrogant attempt to paint Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet as dangerous actors, as out-of-control lawless children that must be corralled into reason (or prison).

Again, Israel cannot brook such global contempt. By and large, Israelis say to the world: Keep your chutzpah in check. Do not try to lord over Israel with your mistaken assumptions and smug solutions. Israel more than deserves the benefit of the doubt as it fights for its long-term security and makes apt decisions about the right radius of diplomacy.

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