

Need to focus on crushing Hamas

written by David M. Weinberg | 15.12.2023

What is true in everyday life is true in wartime too: You must focus to succeed. Try to do too many things simultaneously and you're set for setback, disappointment, or failure.

That is what has happened to Israel over the past three weeks, ever since it agreed to a series of pauses in the war against Hamas and then reignited the ground campaign against Hamas under increased US scrutiny. It has lost focus. It is seeking to concurrently accomplish diverse goals and balance competing interests. And in trying to cover too many bases, Israel risks failure across the board.

Therefore, it is time for Israel's wartime leaders to concentrate once again their efforts on the one most critical goal of this war; the main, most consensual, and most legitimate objective. Distilled to its essence, this is eradication of the Hamas threat to Israel and the consequent restoration of Israel's deterrent posture versus all enemies in the Middle East.

This means and requires application of maximum, maximum, maximum military force against Hamas in every hideaway corner and under every school, mosque, and UNRWA facility in which Hamas terrorists are rottenly taking sanctuary. Without letup, without forbearance. With cold, calculated, crushing military force. With all tools at Israel's disposal, as swiftly as possible, and without unnecessarily exposing Israeli troops to death and injury.

This is not a matter of Israeli "rage" as some nasty observers in Western capitals have insinuated. It is a matter of smart, rightful, and reasonable policy. It is the only way to decisively win the war and to fix the future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

It is the only way to end the so-called "cycle of violence" versus Gaza (- oh, how I hate that phrase which suggests equivalency of responsibility for decades of conflict!). It also is the only way to restart the drive towards Saudi-Israeli reconciliation and broader Mideast stability and peace.

Everything else is secondary. Every other interest and concern, no matter how

poignant, compassionate, or pressing, must remain subordinate to the overarching master goal of erasing Hamas' control of the Gaza Strip. Nothing should distract Israel's leaders from their focus; nothing should dissuade them from achieving the fullest possible victory over Hamas.

Alas, this means that humanitarian concerns, both for the one hundred or so Israeli civilians still held hostage by Hamas and for the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians held hostage by Hamas, must be relegated to the sidelines. It is not easy or nice to say so, but concern for the hostages (- and yes, Palestinians in Gaza are brutally kept captive by Hamas in every way) cannot dominate Israeli decision-making.

This means that Israel cannot be dragged again into a drip-drip hostage negotiation horror show which reinforced Hamas' dominance in Palestinian politics and which sapped Israeli national consensus about prosecuting the war to its fullest, necessary completion.

It means that Israel cannot daintily tiptoe through the boobytrapped tulips that Hamas has planted in every kindergarten and classroom, in every bedroom and hospital storeroom in Gaza.

It means that Israel cannot tie itself into knots trying to satisfy every unfair, outrageous, so-called international humanitarian law regulation that was made-up especially for, and is applied only to, Israel - precisely, maliciously to neuter Israel's military.

It means that Israel cannot succumb to international pressures to provide more fuel for Gaza, literally fueling the enemy.

It means that Israel cannot be so solicitous of Egyptian anxieties (fear of refugee spillover into Sinai), so accepting of European condescension (threatening to hold Israel "accountable"), so consenting of Russian duplicity (partnering with Iran while calling for a ceasefire with Hamas), or so acquiescent in the face of false accusations (like "escalating settler violence" or "indiscriminate bombing").

It also means that Israel cannot accept nonsensical calls for long-term Israeli territorial withdrawals (based on the fantasy-for-now of a "revitalized" Palestinian Authority) or tolerate idiotic international security suggestions (like the landing of Gulf Arab, UN, or forces from Mars to keep the peace in Gaza).

Israeli leaders must repulse such pressures and focus with laser-like sharpness on the imperative of the moment: Obliteration of Hamas to obtain security for Israel and restore Israel's regional deterrent posture. Otherwise, there will be no peace in the Middle East, and there may be no future at all for Israel.

Those who profess to care about Israel, who aver support for Israel's "right" to defend itself, cannot play both sides of the game; cannot call in mealy-mouth fashion "on all sides to end the cycle of violence." Neutrality is complicity in the crimes of Hamas. Calling for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire that does not permanently defang Hamas is a call for Israeli defeat. No thank you.

IN BROADER PERSPECTIVE, Israel must push back against the super-quick global criticism of Israel whenever the IDF gets into actual combat with the likes of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, whether in Gaza, Jenin, or Jerusalem. The temerity and hypocrisy of Israeli critics is simply astounding.

I ask: Just who exactly has the right to tell Israel how to defend its borders? Perhaps the EU or UN Security Council - neither of which has done diddly-squat about the 11-year-long civil war slaughter in Syria or Iran's subversive muckraking across the Middle East?

None of these organizations have the right to jeer Israel's defensive actions in the territories and along its borders, nor Israeli military operations beyond its borders - even if the IDF were to use indiscriminate or near-nuclear force, which it isn't.

Israel need not apologize for defending itself against Palestinian terrorist invasions, Palestinian terror attack tunnels, Palestinian rocket barrages, and even pro-terrorist anti-Israel NGOs. Soon enough, we will probably have to say also that Israel need not apologize for striking overpoweringly at Iranian-Hezbollah commando posts and armament depots deep in Lebanon.

Israel also must never apologize for repeatedly reminding the world that Jews are not foreigners in their ancestral homeland. Israel is not an occupying force in the Sharon plains, or the sand dunes of the Negev adjoining Gaza, or the hilltops of Judea and Samaria, or in Jerusalem. It has a right to defend its homeland without being subjected to cheeky censure and supercilious send-guessing.

The nations of the world ought to be exceedingly circumspect in telling Israel what to do, how to conduct its politics, where to erect its security fences, how to

conduct its military campaigns, where to draw its borders and how to defend them.

Having failed the Jewish People throughout history all the way through the Holocaust; and having been so wrong with Pollyannaish hopes for the Oslo Accords, the Arab Spring, and the JCPOA nuclear deal with Iran – the nations of the world ought to give Israeli leaders the benefit of the doubt. They ought to respect Israeli decision-making, not sneer at it, when Israel's leaders proceed cautiously in the diplomatic arena or act resolutely in the security sphere.

As former Prime Minister Menachem Begin once challenged and chastised the German Chancellor, “Are we a vassal state? And would you prefer a weak Israel?”

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