

A Great Opportunity Beckons for Israel To Deal a Mortal Blow to Its Deadliest Enemies

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by Conrad Black

It is my pleasure to dissent, cautiously and soberly but with some insistence, on the pessimistic utterances that resound with increasing frequency and volume over conditions in the Middle East. The anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian demonstrations are to some extent increasing throughout the

advanced world.

Yet since no civilized person could possibly justify the atrocities committed by Hamas and undisputed by them, the reason for the increasing demonstrations is the phenomenon that since Palestinian atrocities will not alter or dilute the support given by overseas Palestinian sympathizers to the Palestinian entitlement to the land of Israel, they have no alternative than to intensify the demonstrations to demonstrate that even the crimes of Hamas do not change the loyalties and ambitions of Palestinian militants.

Most of these demonstrations are peaceful and even at London on Saturday there were 100,000 such demonstrators, but none explicitly supported Hamas, which would be an offense in the United Kingdom because Hamas is officially designated a terrorist organization. Nor is there any evidence that these demonstrators are an unusually heavy turnout of the usual supporters of the Palestinian and anti-Israeli cause.

Almost all polls indicate majority support for Israel in the advanced Western countries in Europe, North America, Australasia, and the Far East. For the committed pro-Palestinians, the greater the Palestinian outrages, the greater the need to show continuing support.

As Israel now has, with 360,000 reservists, approximately 500,000 trigger-pullers, well-trained and well-armed, the correlation of forces is overwhelmingly with Israel as Hamas and Hezbollah together have only a quarter of the total and minimal heavy vehicles and artillery. They have an enormous number of rockets but very few mobile launchers and Israel will be able to decimate the launch-sites of the longer-range missiles very quickly.

None of Israel's potential adversaries, including Iran, has a substantial air force, and Iran knows that provocations beyond a certain point will leave it extremely vulnerable to aerial

attack, including its nuclear military program that the Obama and Biden administrations have facilitated, almost, but not quite, to completion and long-range launch capability.

In delaying a ground attack upon Gaza for two weeks, Israel has not only mustered its forces and brought whatever contingency plans it had up to a current state of precision. Its forces are well-fed and rested, while Hamas must by now be on short rations and will have had a nerve-racking fortnight since their foray into Israel.

Apparently, about 700,000 of the 1 million persons in the northern part of Gaza have followed Israeli warnings to evacuate to the south, despite Hamas attempting to impede them so as not to lose the population they ostensibly serve as human shields against Israeli retribution. The majority of Hamas' tunnels are in the north and this flight of population will facilitate the destruction of the tunnels, which will entail use of flame-throwers and various gasses as well as flooding and high explosives and even perhaps the Egyptian technique of pumping raw sewage into the Hamas tunnels.

When northern Gaza has been adequately purged of Hamas storage facilities, staging areas, and identifiable personnel, it will then be possible to usher the civil population back from the south to the north and essentially replicate the same process in the South.

Obviously not all of the Hamas paramilitary personnel will be killed or captured, though any individuals who actively resist Israeli forces will be assumed to be members of Hamas and killed or captured and detained indefinitely. Those that remain will have lost their weapons and ammunition and anything remotely useful to armed combat. At that point it would be appropriate to consider matters of governance.

The restoration of a United Nations mandate might be acceptable on a solemn attestation of maintaining Gaza as a

weapon-free zone other than police-level arms in the hands of the patrolling powers. These powers would have to include the United States as well as acceptable Arab contingents, which would include Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Jordan.

In addition, all access points into and out of Gaza would have to be monitored by the Israelis. Under these conditions it would be possible to revive international assistance to Gaza whose application would be carefully monitored by the occupying forces to ensure the avoidance of the inexcusable betrayal of recent years in which Western humanitarian assistance was redeployed to acquire weapons, build fortifications, and pay for underground invasion routes into Israel.

There will certainly be significant Israeli casualties in this operation, but as in the dire predictions that preceded both wars in Iraq, these estimates are probably wildly exaggerated. It will not be room-to-room, house-to-house fighting, a reenactment of the Battle of Stalingrad in the tropics. If there is resistance in any building the building will be blown up.

The casualties may be heavy among the hostages, which is another reason for Israel sagely to allow some time for efforts to extract the hostages before the heavy combat begins. But Israel is not seeking permanent occupation of Gaza and it has no particular aversion, as it has demonstrated again these last two weeks, in leveling buildings where hostile elements are suspected to be within.

Construction techniques in Gaza have a minimum of structural steel and the Israeli Air Force has demonstrated again in recent days how comparatively easy it is to reduce those buildings to rubble instantly with minimal collateral damage.

Presumably, these past two weeks have also enabled Israeli

intelligence to get a relatively clear picture of where its most desirable targets are; in that sense, the old military adage that time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted will prove true.

As each day passes, Israel becomes stronger and Hamas becomes weaker. The attacks of October 7 were a sign of weakness, not strength, apparently generated by Iranian fear of a comprehensive agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel. The time since then has been a further demonstration of Israeli strength, which is intensifying while Hamas tries desperately to hide among the civilian population, and is endlessly harassed and enfeebled from the air and otherwise.

The conventional wisdom is that there can be no consideration of a two-state solution because Israel could not possibly now accept as an intimate neighbor the state that committed these recent infamies. The Palestinians have repeatedly been offered independence – the West Bank and Gaza, for many years. Yet they will not accept Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

Their only interest in a two-state solution was to give themselves a stronger platform from which to conquer Israel and kill or expel all of the Jews. The comprehensive destruction of Hamas may resuscitate the corrupt and discredited Palestine Liberation Organization as the principal voice of the Palestinians.

The more severe and terminal the punishment of Hamas, the greater the possibility that the Palestinians will finally accept half a loaf, which was the maximum they could have expected after Britain promised the territory simultaneously to the Jews and the Arabs more than a century ago.

This remains a great opportunity for Israel to deal a mortal blow to its deadliest enemies while rubbing the noses of the Iranian ayatollahs, not just in their barbarism and hypocrisy,

but in the impotence of their attempt to inflict their genocidal ambitions on the Jews.

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